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212

WESTERN













# SERMONS,

ON

## SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

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BY THE LATE  
REV. JOHN WESLEY, M. A.  
Bishop of the Methodist Church.

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Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not  
come to destroy, but to fulfil.

For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle  
shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

MAT. v. 17, 18.

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But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray, standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

But thou when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, he shall reward thee openly.

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the Heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him.

After this manner, therefore, pray ye: Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

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# SERMON I.

*Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount.*

## DISCOURSE I.

MATTHEW, 5. 1, 2, 3, 4.

*And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain ; and when he was set, his disciples came unto him :*

*And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are they that mourn ; for they shall be comforted.*

1 **O**UR Lord had now gone about all galilee, beginning at the time when John was cast into prison, not only teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, but likewise healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people. It was a natural consequence of this, that there followed him great multitudes from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from the region beyond Jordan. And seeing the multitudes, whom no synagogue could contain, even had there been any at hand, he went up into a mountain, where there was room for all, that came unto him from every quarter. And when he was set, as the manner of the Jews was, his disciples came unto him. And he opened his mouth, (an expression denoting the beginning of a solemn discourse) and taught them, saying—

2. Let us observe, who it is, that is here speaking, that we may take heed how we hear. It is the Lord of heaven and earth, the Creator of all, who as such, has a right to dispose of all his creatures ; the Lord our governor, whose kingdom is from everlasting, and ruleth over all ; the great Lawgiver, who can well enforce all his laws, being able to save and to destroy ; yea, to punish with everlasting

destruction from his presence, and from the glory of his power. It is the eternal wisdom of the Father, who knoweth whereof we are made, and understands our inmost frame ; who knows how we stand related to God, to one another, to every creature which God hath made ; and consequently how to adapt every law he prescribes, to all the circumstances wherein he hath placed us. It is he who is loving unto every man, whose mercy is over all his works : the God of love, who having emptied himself of his eternal glory, is come forth from his Father, to declare his will to the children of men, and then, goeth again to the Father : who is sent of God to open the eyes of the blind, to give light to them that sit in darknes. It is the great Prophet of the Lord, concerning whom God hath solemnly declared long ago, Whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. Or, as the apostle expresses it, Every soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

3. And what is it which he is teaching? The Son of God, who came from heaven, is here shewing us the way to heaven, to the place which he hath prepared for us, the glory he hath before the world began. He is teaching us the true way to life everlasting, the royal way which leads to the kingdom. And the only true way ; for there is none besides : all other paths leads to destruction. From the character of the speaker we are well assured, that he hath declared the full and perfect will of God. He hath uttered not one tittle too much ; nothing more than he had received from the Father. Nor too little ; he hath not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. Much less hath he uttered any thing wrong, any thing contrary to the will of him that sent him. All his words are true and right, concerning all things, and shall stand fast for ever and ever.

And we may easily remark, that in explaining and confirming these faithful and true sayings, he takes care to refute not only the mistakes of the Scribes and Pharisees, which then were, the false comments whereby the Jewish teachers of that age had perverted the word of God ; but all the practical mistakes, that are inconsistent with salvation, which should ever arise in the christian church : all

the comments whereby the christian teachers (so called) of any age or nation, should pervert the word of God, and teach unwearied souls to seek death in the error of their life.

4. And hence we are naturally led to observe, whom it is that he is here teaching? Not the apostle alone: if so, he had no need to have gone up into the mountain. A room in the house of Matthew, or any of his disciples, would have contained the twelve. Nor does it in any wise appear, that the disciples who came unto him were the twelve only. But to put this out of all question, to make it undeniably plain, that where it is said, He opened his mouth and taught them, the word *them* includes all the multitudes, who went up with him into the mountain, we need only observe the concluding verses of the seventh chapter. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings the multitudes were astonished at his doctrine (or teaching).—For he taught them (the multitudes) as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.

Nor was it only those multitudes who were with him on the mount, to whom he now taught the way of salvation: but all the children of men, the whole race of mankind, the children that were yet unborn: all the generations to come, even to the end of the world, who should ever hear the words of this life.

5. And this all men allow, with regard to some parts of the ensuing discourse. No man, for instance denies, that what is said of poverty of spirit, relates to all mankind. But many have supposed, that other parts concerned only the apostles, or the first christians, or ministers of Christ; and were never designed for the generality of men, who consequently, have nothing at all to do with them.

But may we not justly enquire, Who told them this? That some parts of this discourse, concerned only the apostles? Or the christians of the apostolic age? Or the ministers of Christ? Bare assertions are not a sufficient proof, to establish a point of so great importance. Has then our Lord himself taught us; that some parts of his discourse, do not concern all mankind? Without doubt, had it been so, he would have told us; he could not have omitted so necessary an information. But has he told us so? Where? In the discourse itself? No; here is not the least intimation of it. Has he said so elsewhere? In any

other of his discourses? Not one word so much as glancing this way, can we find in any thing he ever spoke, either to the multitudes or to his disciples. Has any of the apostles, or other inspired writers, left such an instruction upon record? No such thing. No assertion of this kind is to be found in all the oracles of God. Who then are the men who are so much wiser than God? Wise, so far above that is written?

6. Perhaps they will say, "That the reason of the thing requires such a restriction to be made." If it does, it must be on one of these two accounts; because without such a restriction, the discourse would either be apparently absurd, or would contradict some other scripture. But this is not the case. It will plainly appear, when we come to examine the several particulars, that there is no absurdity at all in applying all which our Lord hath here delivered, to all mankind. Neither will it infer any contradiction to any thing else he has delivered, nor to any other scripture whatever. Nay, it will farther appear, that either all the parts of this discourse are to be applied to men in general, or no part; seeing they are all connected together, all joined as the stones in an arch, of which you cannot take one away, without destroying the whole fabric.

7. We may, lastly, observe, how our Lord teaches here. And surely, as at all times, so particularly at this, he speaks as never man spake. Not as the holy man of old; altho' they also spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Not as Peter, or James, or John, or Paul. They were indeed wise master-builders in his church. But still in this, in the degrees of heavenly wisdom, the servant is not as his Lord. No, nor even as himself, at any other time, or on any other occasion. It does not appear, that it was ever his design, at any other time or place, to lay down at once the whole plan of his religion, to give us a full prospect of christianity, to describe at large the nature of that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Particular branches of this he has indeed described, on a thousand different occasions. But never besides here, did he give, of set purpose, a general view of the whole. Nay, we have nothing else of this kind in all the Bible: unless one should except that short sketch of holiness, delivered by God in those ten words or commandments, to Moses, on



Mount Sinai. But even here how wide a difference is there between one and the other? Even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth, 2 Cor. 3. 10.

8. Above all, with what amazing love does the Son of God, here reveal his Father's will to man! He does not bring us again to the mount that burned with fire, nor into blackness, and darkness, and tempest. He does not speak as when he thundered out of heaven; when the Highest gave his thunder, hail-stones and coals of fire. He now addresses us with his still, small voice. Blessed or happy are the poor in spirit. Happy are the mourners, the meek; those that hunger after righteousness; the merciful, the pure in heart: happy in the end and in the way; happy in this life, and in life everlasting! As if he had said, who is he that lusteth to live, and would fain see good days? Behold, I shew you the thing which your soul longeth for; see the way you have so long sought in vain! The way of pleasantness; the path to calm, joyous peace, to heaven below and heaven above!

9. At the same time, with what authority does he teach! Well might they say, "Not as the Scribes." Observe the manner, (but it cannot be expressed in words) the air, with which he speaks! Not as Moses, the servant of God: nor as Abraham, his friend; nor as any of the prophets; nor as any of the sons of men. It is something more than human; more than can agree to any created being. It speaks the creator of all, a God, a God appears! Yea, the being of beings, Jehovah, the self-existent, the supreme, the God who is over all, blessed for ever!

10. This divine discourse, delivered in the most excellent method, every subsequent part illustrating those that precede, is commonly, and not improperly divided into three principal branches: the first, contained in the fifth, the second in the sixth, and the third in the seventh chapter. In the first, the sum of all true religion is laid down in eight particulars, which are explained, and guarded against the false glosses of man, in the following parts of the fifth chapter. In the second are rules for that right intention, which we are to preserve in all outward actions; unmixt with worldly desires, or anxious cares for even the necessaries of life. In the third, are cautions against the main

hindrances of religion, closed with an application of the whole.

I. 1. Our Lord, first, lays down the sum of all true religion in eight particulars, which he explains and guards against the false glosses of men to the end of the fifth chapter.

Some have supposed that he designed in these, to point out the several stages of the christian course; the steps which a christian successively takes in his journey to the promised land; others, that all the particulars here set down, belong at all times to every christian: and why may we not allow both the one and the other? What inconsistency is there between them? It is undoubtedly true, that both poverty of spirit and every other temper which is here mentioned, are at all times found, in a greater or less degree, in every real christian. And it is equally true, that real christianity always begins in a poverty of spirit, and goes on in the order here set down till the man of God is made perfect. We begin at the lowest of these gifts of God; yet so as not to relinquish this, when we are called of God, to come up higher; but, whereunto we have already attained, we hold fast, while we press on to what is yet before, to the highest blessings of God in Christ Jesus.

2. The foundation of all is poverty of spirit: here, therefore, our Lord begins: blessed, saith he, are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

It may not improbably be supposed, that our Lord looking on these who were round about him, and observing that not many rich were there, but rather the poor of the world, took occasion from thence, to make a transition from temporal to spiritual things. Blessed saith he (or happy; so the word should be rendered, both in this and the following verses) are the poor in spirit. He does not say, they that are poor, as to outward circumstances; it being not impossible that some of these may be as far from happiness as a monarch upon his throne: but the poor in spirit, they who, whatever their outward circumstances are, have that disposition of heart, which is the first step to all real, substantial happiness, either in this world or that which is to come.

3. Some have judged, that by the poor in spirit here, are meant, those who love poverty, those who are free from

covetousness, from the love of money ; who fear, rather than desire riches. Perhaps they have been induced so to judge, by wholly confining their thought to the very term ; or by considering that weighty observation of St. Paul, that the love of money is the root of all evil. And hence many have wholly divested themselves, not only of riches, but of all worldly goods. Hence also the vows of voluntary poverty, seem to have arisen in the Romish church : it being supposed, that so eminent a degree of this fundamental grace, must be a large step toward the kingdom of heaven.

But these do not seem to have observed, first, that the expression of St. Paul must be understood with some restriction. Otherwise it is not true : for the love of money is not the root, the sole root of all evil. There are a thousand other roots of evil in the world, as sad experience daily shews. His meaning can only be, it is the root of very many evils : perhaps of more than any single vice besides : secondly, That this sense of the expression, poor in spirit, will by no means suit our Lord's present design, which is to lay a general foundation whereon the whole fabric of christianity may be built : a design which would be in no wise answered, by guarding against one particular vice : so that, if even this were supposed to be one part of his meaning, it could not possibly be the whole : thirdly, That it cannot be supposed to be any part of his meaning, unless we charge him with manifest tautology : seeing if poverty of spirit were only freedom from covetousness, from the love of money, or the desire of riches, it would not coincide with what he afterwards mentions, it would be only a branch of purity of heart.

4. Who then are the poor in spirit ! Without question, the humble, they who know themselves : who are convinced of sin ; those to whom God hath given that first repentance, which is previous to faith in Christ.

One of these can no longer say, I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing : as now knowing, that he is wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. He is convinced that he is spiritually poor indeed ; having no spiritual good abiding in him. In me, saith he, dwelleth no good thing ; but whatsoever is evil and abominable. He has a deep sense of the loathsome leprosy of sin, which he brought with him from his mother's womb

which overspreads his whole soul, and totally corrupts every power and faculty thereof. He sees more and more of the evil tempers, which spring from the evil root: the pride and haughtiness of spirit, the constant bias to think of himself more highly than he ought to think: the vanity, the thirst after the esteem or honor that cometh from men: the hatred or envy, the jealousy or revenge, the anger, malice or bitterness; the inbred enmity both against God and man, which appears in ten thousand shapes: the love of the world, the self-will, the foolish and hurtful desires, which cleave to his inmost soul. He is conscious, how deeply he has offended by his tongue; if not by profane, immodest, untrue, or unkind words, yet by discourse which was not good, to the use of edifying, not meet to minister grace to the hearers; which consequently was all corrupt in God's account, and grievous to his holy spirit. His evil works are now likewise ever in his sight; if he tell them, they are more than he is able to express. He may as well think to number the drops of rain, the sands of the sea, or the days of eternity.

5. His guilt is now also before his face: he knows the punishment he has deserved, were it only on account of his carnal mind, the entire, universal corruption of his nature: how much more, on account of all his evil desires and thoughts, of all his sinful words and actions? He cannot doubt for a moment, but the least of these deserves the damnation of hell; the worm that dieth not, and the fire that never shall be quenched. Above all, the guilt of not believing on the name of the only begotten son of God, lies heavy upon him. How, saith he, shall I escape, who neglect so great salvation? He that believeth not, is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him.

6. But what shall he give in exchange for his soul, which is forfeited to the just vengeance of God? Wherewithal shall he come before the Lord? How shall he pay him that he oweth? Were he from this moment to perform the most perfect obedience to every command of God, this would make no amends for a single sin, for any one act of past disobedience: seeing he owes God all the service he is able to perform from this moment to all eternity; could he pay this, it would make no manner of amends, for what he ought to have done before. He sees himself therefore ut-

terly helpless, with regard to atoning for his past sins; utterly unable to make any amends to God, to pay any ransom for his own soul.

But if God would forgive him all that is past, on this one condition, that he should sin no more, that for the time to come he should entirely and constantly obey all his commands: he well knows that this would profit him nothing, being a condition he could never perform. He knows and feels, that he is not able to obey, even the outward commands of God: seeing these cannot be obeyed, while his heart remains in its natural sinfulness and corruption: inasmuch as an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit. But he cannot cleanse a sinful heart: with men this is impossible. So that he is utterly at a loss, even how to begin walking in the path of God's commandments. He knows not how to get one step forward in the way. Incompassed with sin, and sorrow, and fear, and finding no way to escape, he can only cry out, Lord, save, or I perish!

7. Poverty of spirit, as it implies the first step we take in running the race which is set before us, is a just sense of our inward and outward sins, and of our guilt and helplessness. This some have monstrously stiled, the virtue of humility; thus teaching us to be proud of knowing we deserve damnation. But our Lord's expression is quite of another kind; conveying no idea to the hearer, but that of mere want, of naked sin, of helpless guilt and misery.

8. The great apostle, where he endeavors to bring sinners to God, speaks in a manner just answerable to this. The wrath of God, saith he, is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men: a charge which he immediately fixes on the heathen world, and thereby proves, they were under the wrath of God. He next shews, that the Jews were no better than they, and were therefore under the same condemnation: and all this, not in order of their attaining, "the noble virtue of humility," but that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.

He proceeds to shew, that they were helpless as well as guilty; which is the plain purport of all those expressions, Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified. But now the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, without the law is manifested. We

conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law : expressions all tending to the same point, even to hide pride from man : to humble him to the dust, without teaching him to reflect upon his humility as a virtue ; to inspire him with that full piercing conviction of his utter sinfulness, guilt, and helplessness, which casts the sinner, stripped of all, lost and undone, on his strong helper, Jesus Christ the righteous.

9. One cannot but observe here, that christianity begins, just where heathen morality ends : poverty of spirit, conviction of sin, the renouncing ourselves, the not having our own righteousness, the very first point in the religion of Jesus Christ, leaving all Pagan religion behind. This was ever hid from the wise men of this world : insomuch that the whole Roman language, even with all the improvements of the Augustan age, does not afford so much as a name for humility : (the word from whence we borrow this, as is well known, bearing in Latin a quite different meaning :) no, nor was one found in all the copious language of Greece, till it was made by the great apostle.

10. O that we may feel what they were not able to express ! Sinner, awake ! Know thyself ! Know and feel, that thou wert shapen in wickedness, and that in sin did thy mother conceive thee : and that thou thyself hast been heaping up sin upon sin, ever since thou couldst discern good from evil, Sink under the mighty hand of God, as guilty of death eternal : and cast off, renounce, abhor all imagination, of ever being able to help thyself ! Be it all thy hope to be washed in his blood, and renewed by his almighty spirit, who himself bare all our sins in his own body on the tree. So shalt thou witness, happy are the poor in spirit ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11. This is that kingdom of heaven or of God which is within us, even righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. And what is righteousness, but the life of God in the soul : the mind which was in Christ Jesus : the image of God stamped upon the heart, now renewed after the likeness of him that created it ? What is it but the love of God, because he first loved us, and the love of all mankind, for his sake ?

And what is this peace, the peace of God, but that calm serenity of soul, that sweet repose in the blood of Jesus,

which leaves no doubt of our acceptance in him? Which excludes all fear, but the loving filial fear of offending our Father which is in heaven.

This inward kingdom implies also joy in the Holy Ghost, who seals upon our hearts, the redemption which is in Jesus, the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, for the remission of the sins that are past: who giveth us now the earnest of our inheritance, of the crown which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give at that day. And well may this be termed the kingdom of heaven; seeing it is heaven already opened in the soul; the first springing up of those rivers of pleasure which flow at God's right-hand for evermore.

12. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever thou art, to whom God hath given to be poor in spirit, to feel thyself lost, thou hast a right thereto, through the gracious promise of him who cannot lie. It is purchased for thee by the blood of the Lamb. It is very nigh: thou art on the brink of heaven. Another step, and thou enterest into the kingdom, of righteousness, and peace, and joy.—Art thou all sin? Behold the lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world? All unholy? See thy advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Art thou unable to atone for the least of thy sins? He is the propitiation for all sins. Now believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and all thy sins are blotted out. Art thou totally unclean in soul and body? Here is the fountain for sin and uncleanness. Arise and wash away thy sins: stagger no more at the promise through unbelief. Give glory to God: dare to believe! Now cry out, from the ground of thy heart,

Yes, I yield, I yield at last,  
 Listen to thy speaking blood;  
 Me with all my sins I cast  
 On my atoning God!

13. Then thou learnest of him to be lowly of heart.—And this is the true, genuine, christian humility, which flows from a sense of the love of God, reconciled to us in Christ Jesus. Poverty of spirit, in this meaning of the word, begins, where a sense of guilt and of the wrath of God ends; and is, a continual sense of our total depend-

ence on him, for every good thought, or word or work ; of our utter inability to all good, unless he water us every moment : and an obhorence of the praise of men, knowing that all praise is due unto God only. With this is joined a loving shame, a tender humiliation before God, even for the sins which we know he hath forgiven us, and for the sin which still remaineth in our hearts, although we know it is not imputed to our condemnation. Nevertheless the conviction we feel of inbred sin, is deeper every day. The more we grow in grace, the more do we see, of the desperate wickedness of our heart. The more we advance in the knowledge and love of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, (as great a mystery as this may appear, to those who know not the power of God unto salvation) the more do we discern of our alienation from God, of the enmity that is in our carnal mind, and the necessity of our being entirely renewed in righteousness and true holiness.

II. 1. It is true, he has scarce any conception of this, who now begins to know the inward kingdom of heaven. In his prosperity he saith, I shall never be moved ; Thou, Lord, hast made my hill so strong. Sin is so utterly bruised beneath his feet, that he can scarce believe it remaineth in him. Even temptation is silenced, and speaks not again : it cannot approach, but stands afar off. He is born aloft in the charriots of joy and love : he soars as upon the wings of an eagle. But our Lord well knew, that this triumphant state does not often continue long. He therefore presently subjoins, blessed are they that mourn ; for they shall be comforted.

2. Not that we can imagine this promise belongs to those, who mourn only on some worldly account : who are in sorrow and heaviness, merely on account of some worldly trouble or disappointment ; such as the loss of their reputation, or friends ; or the impairing of their fortune. As little title to it have they who are afflicting themselves, thro' fear of some temporal evil : or who pine away with anxious care, or that desire of earthly things which maketh the heart sick. Let us not think, these shall receive any thing from the Lord, he is not in all their thought. Therefore it is that they thus walk in a vain shawdow, and disquiet themselves in vain. And this shall ye have of mine hand, saith the Lord, ye shall lie down in sorrow.



3. The mourners of whom our Lord here speaks, are those that mourn on quite another account : they that mourn after God, after him in whom they did rejoice, with joy unspeakable, when he gave them to taste the good, the pardoning word, and the powers of the world to come. But he now hides his face, and they are troubled ; they cannot see him through the dark cloud. But they see temptation and sin, which they fondly supposed were gone never to return, arising again, following after them again, and holding them in on every side. It is not strange if their soul is now disquieted within them, and trouble and heaviness take hold upon them. Nor will their great enemy fail to improve the occasion ; to ask. “ Where is now thy God ? Where is now the blessedness whereof thou speakest ? The beginning of the kingdom of heaven ? Yea, hath God said, Thy sins are forgiven thee ? Surely God hath not said it. It was only a dream, a mere delusion, a creature of thy own imagination. If thy sins are forgiven, why art thou thus ? Can a pardoned sinner be thus unholy ? ”—And if then, instead of immediately crying to God, they reason with him that is wiser than they, they will be in heaviness indeed, in sorrow of heart, in anguish not to be expressed. Nay, even when God shines again upon the soul, and takes away all doubt of his past mercy, still he that is weak in faith may be tempted and troubled, on account of what is to come : especially, when inward sin revives, and thrusts sore at him that he may fall. Then may he again cry out,

“ I have a sin of fear, that when I’ve spun

“ My last thread, I shall perish on the shore ! ”

Lest I should make shipwreck of the faith, and my last state be worse than the first :

“ Lest all my bread of life should fail,

“ And I sink down unchang’d to hell.”

4. Sure it is, that this affliction for the present is not joyous but grievous. Nevertheless, afterward it bringeth forth peaceable fruit unto them that are exercised thereby. Blessed, therefore, are they that thus mourn, if they tarry the Lord’s leisure, and suffer not themselves to be turned

out of the way, by the miserable comforters of the world ; if they resolutely reject all the comforts of sin, of folly and vanity ; all the idle diversions and amusements of the world, all the pleasures which perish in the using, and which only tend to benumb and stupify the soul, that it may neither be sensible of itself nor God. Blessed are they who follow on to know the Lord, and steadily refuse all other comfort. They shall be comforted by the consolations of his spirit, by a fresh manifestation of his love ; by such a witness of his accepting them in the beloved, as shall nevermore be taken away from them. This full assurance of faith swallows up all doubt, as well as all tormenting fear ; God now giving them a sure hope of enduring substance, and strong consolation through grace.— Without disputing, whether it be possible for any of those to fall away who were once enlightened, and made partakers of the Holy Ghost, it suffices them to say, by the power now resting upon them, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor things to come : nor height, nor depth—shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord !

5. This whole process, both of mourning for an absent God, and recovering the joy of his countenance, seems to be shadowed out in what our Lord spoke to his apostles, the night before his passion. “ Do ye enquire of that I said, A little while and ye shall not see me, and again, a little while and ye shall see me ? Verily verily I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament,” namely, when ye do not see me ; but the world shall rejoice, shall triumph over you, as though your hope were now come to an end. And ye shall be sorrowful, through doubt, through fear, through temptation, through vehement desire : But your sorrow shall be turned into joy, by the return of him whom your soul loveth. A woman when she is in travail, hath sorrow, because her hour is come. But as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now have sorrow : ye mourn and cannot be comforted. But I will see you again : and your heart shall rejoice, with calm, inward joy, and your joy no man taketh from you.

6. But although this mourning is at an end, is lost in holy joy, by the return of the comforter, yet is there another, and a blessed mourning it is, which abides in the children of God. They still mourn for the sins and miseries of mankind: they weep with them that weep. They weep for them that weep not for themselves, for the sinners against their own souls. They mourn for the weakness and unfaithfulness of those, that are in some measure saved from their sins. Who is weak, and they are not weak? Who is offended, and they burn not? They are grieved for the dishonor continually done to the majesty of heaven and earth. At all times they have an awful sense of this, which brings a deep seriousness upon their spirit: a seriousness which is not a little increased, since the eyes of their understanding were opened, by their continually seeing the vast ocean of eternity, without a bottom or a shore, which has already swallowed up millions of millions of men, and is gaping to devour them that yet remain. They see here, the house of God eternal in the heavens; there, hell and destruction without a covering; and thence fell the importance of every moment, which just appears, and is gone for ever.

But all this wisdom of God is foolishness with the world. The whole affair of mourning and poverty of spirit, is with them stupidity and dullness. Nay it is well if they pass so favourable a judgment upon it; if they do not vote it to be mere moping and melancholy, if not downright lunacy and distraction. And it is no wonder at all, that this judgment should be passed, by those who know not God.--- Suppose as two persons were walking together, one should suddenly stop, and with the strongest signs of fear and amazement, cry out, "On what a precipice do we stand? See, we are on the point of being dashed in pieces! Another step, and we fall into that huge abyss. Stop! I will not go on for all the world." When the other, who seemed to himself at least equally sharp-sighted, looked forward and saw nothing of all this; what would he think of his companion? But that he was beside himself: that his head was out of order: that much religion (if he was not guilty of much learning) had certainly made him mad.

8. But let not the children of God the mourners in Zion, be moved by any of these things. Ye whose eyes are enlightened, be not troubled by those, who walk on still in

darkness. Ye do not walk on in a vain shadow : God and eternity are real things. Heaven and hell are in very deed open before you : and ye are on the edge of the great gulph. It has already swallowed up more than words can express, nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, and still yawns to devour, whether they see it or no, the giddy, miserable children of men. O cry aloud ! Spare not ! Lift up your voice to him, who grasps both time and eternity, both for yourselves and your brethren, that ye may be counted worthy to escape the distruction that cometh as a worldwind ! That ye may be brought safe, through all the waves and storms, into the haven where you would be. Weep for yourselves, till he wipes away the tears from your eyes. And even then weep for the miseries that come upon the earth, till the Lord of all shall put a period to misery and sin, shall wipe away the tears from all faces, and the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.

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## SERMON II.

*Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount.*

### DISCOURSE II.

MATTHEW v. 5, 6, 7.

*Blessed are the meek ; for they shall inherit the earth.*

*Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness ; for they shall be filled.*

*Blessed are the merciful ; for they shall obtain mercy.*

I. 1. **W**HEN the winter is past, when the time of singing is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land ; when he that comforts the mourners is now returned, that he may abide with them forever : when, at the brightness of his presence, the clouds disperse, the dark clouds of doubt and uncertainty, the storms of fear

flie away, the waves of sorrow subside, and their spirit again rejoiceth in God their Saviour: then is it that this word is eminently fulfilled, then those whom he hath comforted can bear witness, Blessed, or happy, are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.

2. But who are the meek? Not those who grieve at nothing, because they know nothing; who are not discomposed at the evils that occur, because they discern not evil from good. Not those who are sheltered from the shocks of life, by a stupid insensibility; who have either by nature or art, the virtue of stocks and stones, and resent nothing. Brute philosophers are wholly unconcerned in this matter. Apathy is as far from meekness as from humanity. So that one would not easily conceive, how any christians of the purer ages, especially any of the fathers of the church, could confound these, and mistake one of the foulest errors of Heathenism, for a branch of true christianity.

3. Nor does christian meekness imply, the being without zeal for God, any more than it does ignorance or insensibility. No; it keeps clear of every extreme, whether in excess or defect. It does not destroy but balance the affections, which the God of nature never designed should be rooted out by grace, but only brought and kept under due regulations. It poises the mind aright. It holds an even scale, with regard to anger, and sorrow, and fear: preserving the mean in every circumstance of life, and not declining either to the right-hand or the left.

4. Meekness, therefore, seems properly to relate to our selves. But it may be referred either to God or our neighbor. When this due composure of mind has reference to God, it is usually termed resignation; a calm acquiescence in whatever is his will concerning us, even though it may not be pleasing to nature; saying continually, it is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good.—When we consider it more strictly with regard to ourselves, we stile it patience or contentedness. When it is exerted toward other men, then it is mildness to the good, and gentleness to the evil.

5. They who are truly meek, can clearly discern what is evil; and they can also suffer it. They are sensible of every thing of this kind; but still meekness holds the reins. They are exceeding zealous for the Lord of Hosts; but

their zeal is always guided by knowledge, and tempered in every thought, and word, and work, with the love of man as well as the love of God. They do not desire to extinguish any of the passions, which God has, for wise ends, implanted in their nature. But they have the mastery of all; they hold them all in subjection, and employ them only in subservience to those ends. And thus even the harsher and more displeasing passions, are applicable to the noblest purposes. Even hate, and anger, and fear, when engaged against sin, and regulated by faith and love, are as walls and bulwarks to the soul, so that the wicked one cannot approach to hurt it.

6. It is evident, this divine temper, is not only to abide, but to increase in us day by day. Occasions of exercising, and thereby increasing it, will never be wanting while we remain upon earth. We have need of patience, that after we have done and suffered the will of God, we may receive the promise. We have need of resignation, that we may in all circumstances say, Not as I will, but as thou wilt. And we have need of gentleness toward all men; but especially toward the evil and unthankful: otherwise we shall be overcome of evil, instead of overcoming evil with good.

7. Nor does meekness restrain only the outward act, as the Scribes and Pharisees taught of old, and the miserable teachers, who are not taught of God, will not fail to do in all ages. Our Lord guards against this, and shews the true extent of it, in the following words: "Ye have heard, that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment," ver. 21, &c.

"But I say unto you, that whosoever shall be angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool shall be in danger of hell-fire."

8. Our Lord here ranks under the head of murder, even that anger which goes no farther than heart; which does not shew itself by any outward unkindness; no, not so much as a passionate word.

Whosoever is angry with his brother, with any man living, seeing we are all brethren; whosoever feels any unkindness in his heart, any temper contrary to love: whose-

ever is angry without a cause, without a sufficient cause, or farther than that cause requires, shall be in danger of the judgment, shall in that moment be obnoxious to the righteous judgment of God.

But would not one be inclined to prefer the reading of those copies, which omit the word without a cause? Is it not entirely superfluous? For if anger at persons be a temper contrary to love, how can there be a cause, a sufficient cause for it? Any that will justify it in the sight of God?

Anger at sin, we allow. In this sense we may be angry and yet we sin not. In this sense our Lord himself, is once recorded to have been angry. He looked round about upon them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts. He was grieved at the sinners, and angry at the sin. And this is undoubtedly right before God.

9. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca: Whosoever shall give way to anger, so as to utter any contemptuous word. It is observed by commentators, that Raca is a Syriac word, which properly signifies, empty, vain, foolish: So that it is as indiffensive an expression as can well be used, toward one at whom we are displeas'd. And yet whosoever should use this, as our Lord assures us, shall be in danger of the council: Rather, shall be obnoxious thereto: he shall be liable to a severer sentence from the Judge of all the earth.

But whosoever shall say, thou fool—Whosoever shall so give place to the devil, as to break out into reviling, into designedly reproachful and contumelious language, shall be obnoxious to hell-fire, shall in that instant be liable to the highest condemnation. It should be observed, that our Lord describes all these, as obnoxious to capital punishment. The first, to strangling, usually inflicted on those who were condemn'd in one of the inferior courts: the second to stoning which was frequently inflicted on those who were condemn'd by the great council at Jerusalem; the third to burning alive, inflicted only on the highest offenders, in the valley of the sons of Hinnom.

10. And whereas men naturally imagine, that God will excuse their defect in some duties, for their exactness in others, our Lord next takes care to cut off that vain, tho' common imagination. He shews, that it is impossible for

any sinner to commute with God ; who will not accept one duty for another, nor take a part of obedience for the whole. He warns us, that the performing our duty to God, will not excuse us from our duty to our neighbor : that works of piety, as they are called, will be so far from commending us to God, if we were wanting in charity, that on the contrary, that want of charity will make all those works an abomination to the Lord.

Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, on account of thy unkind behaviour toward him, of thy calling him, Raca, or thou fool ; think not that thy gift will atone for thy anger ; or that it will find any acceptance with God, so long as thy conscience is defiled with the guilt of unrepented sin. Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, (at least, do all that in thee lies toward being reconciled) and then come and offer thy gift, ver. 23, 24.

11. And let there be no delay in what so nearly concerneth thy soul. Agree with thine adversary quickly—Now : upon the spot—while thou art in the way with him—If it be possible, before he go out of thy sight—Lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge—Lest he appeal to God, the judge of all, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, to Satan, the executioner of the wrath of God, and thou be cast into prison, into hell, there to be reserved to the judgement of the great day. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the utmost farthing. But this it is impossible for thee ever to do ; seeing thou hast nothing to pay. Therefore, if thou art once in that prison, the smoke of thy torment must ascend up for ever and ever.

12. Mean time the meek shall inherit the earth. Such is the foolishness of worldly wisdom ! The wise of the world had warned them again and again. “ that if they did not resent such treatment, if they would tamely suffer themselves to be thus abused, there would be no living for them upon earth ; that they would never be able to procure the common necessaries of life, nor to keep even what they had ; that they could expect no peace, no quiet possession, no enjoyment of any thing.” Most true—suppose there were no God in the world ; or suppose he did not concern



himself with the children of men. But when God ariseth to judgment, and to help all the meek upon earth: how doth he laugh all this heathen wisdom to scorn, and turn the fierceness of man into his praise! He takes a peculiar care, to provide them with all things needful for life and godliness. He secures to them the provision he hath made, in spite of the force, fraud, or malice of men. And what he secures, he gives them richly to enjoy. It is sweet to them, be it little or much. As in patience they possess their soul, so they truly possess whatever God hath given them. They are always content, always pleased with what they have. It pleases them, because it pleases God. So that while their heart, their desire, their joy is in heaven, they may truly be said to inherit the earth.

13. But there seems to be a yet farther meaning in these words, even that they shall have a more eminent part in the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, in that inheritance, a general description of which (and the particulars we shall know hereafter) St. John hath given in the 20th chapter of the Revelation: And I saw an angel come down from heaven - and he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent - and bound him a thousand years—and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witnesses of Jesus, and for the word of God, and of them which had not worshipped the beast neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again, until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection: blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power. But they shall be priests of God and Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

II. 1. Our Lord has heretofore been more immediately employed, in removing the hindrances of true religion: such is pride, the first, grand hindrance of all religion, which is taken away by poverty of spirit; levity, and thoughtlessness, which prevent any religion from taking root in the soul, till they are removed by holy mourning: such are anger, impatience, discontent, which are all healed by Christian meekness. And when once these hindrances are removed, these evil diseases of the soul, which were continually raising false cravings therein, and filling it with sickly ap-

petites, the native appetite of a heathen-born spirit returns ; it hungers and thirsts after righteousness : and blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness : for they shall be filled.

2. Righteousness (as was observed before) is the image of God, the mind which was in Christ Jesus. It is every holy and heavenly temper in one ; springing from, as well as terminating in the love of God, as our father and redeemer, and the love of all men, for his sake.

3. Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after this : in order fully to understand which expression, we should observe, first, that hunger and thirst are the strongest of all our bodily appetites. In like manner this hunger in the soul, this thirst after the image of God, is the strongest of all our spiritual appetites, when it is once awakened in the heart : yea, it swallows up all the rest in that one great desire, to be renewed after the likeness of him that created us. We should secondly observe, that from the time we begin to hunger and thirst, those appetites do not cease, but are more and more craving and importunate, till we either eat and drink or die. And even so, from the time that we begin to hunger and thirst after the whole mind which was in Christ, these spiritual appetites do not cease, but cry after their food with more and more importunity. Nor can they possibly cease, before they are satisfied, while there is any spiritual life remaining. We may thirdly observe, That hunger and thirst are satisfied with nothing but meat and drink. If you would give to him that is hungry all the world beside, all the elegance of apparel, all the trappings of state, all the treasure upon earth, yea thousands of gold and silver : if you would pay him ever so much honour, he regards it not ; all these things are then of no account with him. He would still say, these are not the things I want : give me food, or else I die. The very same is the case with every soul that truly hungers and thirsts after righteousness. He can find no comfort in any thing but this ; he can be satisfied with nothing else. Whatever you offer besides, it is lightly esteemed ; whether it be riches, or honour, or pleasure, he still says, this is not the thing which I want. Give me love, or else I die !

4. And it is as impossible to satisfy such a soul, a soul that is a thirst for God, the living God, with what the world

accounts religion, as with what they account happiness. The religion of the world implies three things ; first, The doing no harm, the abstaining from outward sin ; at least from such as is scandalous, as robbery, theft, common swearing, drunkenness ; secondly, The doing good, the relieving the poor, the being charitable, as it is called : thirdly, The using the means of grace ; at least, the going to church and to the Lord's supper. He in whom these three marks are found, is termed by the world a religious man. But will this satisfy him who hungers after God ? No. It is not food for his soul. He wants a religion of a nobler kind, a religion higher and deeper than this. He can no more feed on this poor, shallow, formal thing, than he can fill his belly with the east wind. True he is careful to abstain from the very appearance of evil : he is zealous of good works. He attends all the ordinances of God. But all this is not what it longs for. This is only the outside of that religion, which he insatiably hungers after. The knowledge of God in Christ Jesus. the life which is hid with Christ in God, the being joined unto the Lord in one spirit, the having fellowship with the father and the son : the walking in the light as God is in the light, the being purified even as he is pure : this is the religion, the righteousness he thirsts after. Nor can he rest, till he thus trusts in God.

5. Blessed are they who thus hunger and thirst after righteousness. For they shall be filled. They shall be filled with the thing which they long for ; even with righteousness and true holiness. God shall satisfy them with the blessings of his goodness, with the felicity of his chosen. He shall feed them with the bread of heaven, with the manna of his love. He shall give them to drink of his pleasures as out of the river, which he that drinketh of, shall never thirst : only for more and more of the water of life. This thirst shall endure for ever.

The painful thirst, the fond desire  
 The joyous presence shall remove :  
 But my full soul shall still require  
 A whole eternity of love.

6. Whosoever then thou art, to whom God hath given to hunger and thirst after righteousness, cry unto him that thou mayest never lose that inestimable gift, that this divine appetite may never cease. If many rebuke thee, and bid thee hold thy peace, regard them not, yea, cry so much the more, Jesus, master, have mercy on me! Let me not live, but to be holy, as thou art holy! No more spend thy money for that which is not bread, nor thy labor for that which satisfieth not. Canst thou hope to dig happiness out of the earth? To find it in the things of the world. O trample under foot all its pleasures, despise its honours, count its riches as dung and dross: yea, and all the things which are beneath the sun, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus; for the entire renewal of thy soul in that image of God, wherein it was originally created. Beware of quenching that blessed hunger and thirst, by what the world calls religion: a religion of form, of outside show, which leaves the heart as earthly and sensual as ever. Let nothing satisfy thee but the power of godliness, but a religion that is spirit and life; thy dwelling in God and God in thee, the being an inhabitant of eternity; the entering in by the blood of sprinkling within the veil, and sitting in heavenly places with Christ Jesus.

III. 1. And the more they are filled with the life of God, the more tenderly will they be concerned for those, who are still without God in the world, still dead in trespasses and sins. Nor shall this concern for others lose its reward. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

The word used by our Lord, more immediately implies, the compassionate, the tender-hearted: those, who far from despising, earnestly grieve for those that do not hunger after God. This eminent part of brotherly love, is here (by a common figure) put for the whole: so that the merciful, in the full sense of the term, are they who love their neighbors as themselves.

2. Because of the vast importance of this love, without which, though we speak with the tongues of men and angels, though we had the gift of prophecy, and understood all mysteries and all knowledge, though we had all faith so as to remove mountains; yea, though we gave all our goods to feed the poor, and our very bodies to be burned, it would

profit us nothing: the wisdom God has given us by the apostle Paul, a full and particular account of it: by considering which we shall most clearly discern, who are the merciful that shall obtain mercy.

3. Charity, or love (as it were to be wished it had been rendered throughout, being a far plainer and less ambiguous word) the love of our neighbor as Christ hath loved us, suffereth long, is patient toward all men. It suffers all the weakness, ignorance, errors, infirmities, all the slowness and littleness of faith, in the children of God; all the malice and wickedness of the children of the world. And it suffers all this, not only for a time, for a short season, but to the end: still feeding our enemy when he hungers; if he thirst, still giving him drink: thus continually heaping coals of fire, of melting love, upon his head.

4. And in every step toward this desirable end, the overcoming evil with good, love is kind: it is soft, mild, benign. It stands at the utmost distance from fierceness, from all harshness or sourness of spirit; and inspires the sufferer at once with the most amiable sweetness, and the most fervent and tender affection.

5. Consequently, love envieth not, it is impossible it should, it is directly opposite to that baneful temper. It cannot be, that he who has this tender affection to all, who earnestly wishes all temporal and spiritual blessings, all good things in this world and the world to come, to every soul that God hath made, should be pained at his bestowing any good gift, on any child of man. If he has himself received the same, he does not grieve but rejoice, that another partakes of the common benefit. If he has not, he blesses God, that his brother at least has, and is herein happier than himself. And the greater his love, the more does he rejoice, in the blessings of all mankind: The farther is he removed from every kind and degree of envy toward any creature.

6. Love *cu perpereuetai*. Not vaunteth not itself, which coincides with the very next words, but rather (as the word likewise properly imports) is not rash or hasty in judging. It will not hastily condemn any one. It does not pass a severe sentence, on a slight or sudden view of things. It first weighs all the evidence, particularly that which is brought in favor of the accused. A true lover of his neighbor, is

not like the generality of men, who, even in cases of the nicest nature, "see a little, presume a great deal, and so jump to the conclusion." No; he proceeds with wariness and circumspection, taking heed to every step: willingly subscribing to that rule of the ancient heathen, (O where will the modern christian appear!) "I am so far from lightly believing what one man says against another, that I will not easily believe what a man says against himself. I will always allow him second thoughts, and many times council too."

7. It follows, love is not puffed up. It does not incline or suffer any man to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but rather to think soberly. Yea, it humbles the soul unto the dust. It destroys all high conceits engendering pride, and makes us rejoice to be as nothing, to be little and vile, the lowest of all, the servant of all.—They who are kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, cannot but in honor prefer one another. Those who having the same love are of one accord, do in lowliness of mind each esteem other better than themselves.

8. It doth not behave itself unseemly. It is not rude, or willingly offensive to any. It renders to all their due: fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor; courtesy, civility, humanity to all the world; in their several degrees honouring all men. A late writer defines good breeding, nay, the highest degree of it, politeness, "a continual desire to please, appearing in all the behavior." But if so, there is none so well bred as a christian, a lover of all mankind. For he cannot but desire to please all men, for their good, to edification. And this desire cannot be hid: it will necessarily appear in all his intercourse with men. For his love is without dissimulation; it will appear in all his actions and conversation: yea, and will constrain him, tho' without guile, to become all things to all men, if by any means he may save some.

9. And in becoming all things to all men, love seeketh not her own. In striving to please all men, the lover of mankind has no eye at all to his own temporal advantage. He covets no man's silver or gold, or apparel: he desires nothing but the salvation of their souls. Yea, in some sense he may be said, not to seek his own spiritual, any more than temporal advantage. For while he is on the full stretch

to save their souls from death, he, as it were, forgets himself. He does not think of himself, so long as that zeal for the glory of God swallows him up. Nay, at some times, he may almost seem through an excess of love, to give up himself, both his soul and his body : while he cries out with Moses, O ! this people have sinned a great sin. Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin. And if not, blot me out of the book which thou hast written ! Or with St. Paul. I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh !

10. No marvel that such love is not provoked : — let it be observed, the word easily, strangely inserted in the translation, is not in the original. St. Paul's words are absolute. Love is not provoked : it is not provoked to unkindness toward any one. Occasions indeed will frequently occur ; outward provocations of various kinds : but love does not yield to provocation. It triumphs over all. In all trials it looketh unto Jesus, and is more than conqueror in his love.

'Tis not improbable, that our translators inserted that word, as it were to excuse the apostle ; who, as they supposed, might otherwise appear to be wanting, in the very love which he so beautifully describes. They seem to have supposed this from a phrase in the Acts of the Apostles, which is likewise very inaccurately translated. When Paul and Barnabas disagreed concerning John, the " translation runs thus, and the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder." This naturally induces the reader to suppose, that they were equally sharp therein : That St. Paul, who was undoubtedly right with regard to the point in question (it being quite improper to take John with them again, who had deserted them before) was as much provoked as Barnabas who gave such a proof of his anger, as to leave the work for which he had been set apart by the Holy Ghost. But the original imports no such thing ; nor does it affirm, that St. Paul was provoked at all. It simply says, and there was a sharpness, a paroxysm of anger : In consequence of which Barnabas left St. Paul, took John, and went his own way. Paul then chose Silas and departed, being recommended by the brethren to the grace of God ; (which is not said concerning Barnabas) and he went through Syria and Cilicia, as he had proposed, confirming the churches. But to return.

11. Love prevents a thousand provocations which would otherwise arise, because it thinketh no evil. Indeed the merciful man cannot avoid knowing many things that are evil, he cannot but see them with his own eyes, and hear them with his own ears. For love does not put out his eyes, so that it is impossible for him, not to see that such things are done. Neither does it take away his understanding any more than his senses, so that he cannot but know that they are evil. For instance, when he sees a man strike his neighbour, or hears him blaspheme God, he cannot either question the thing done, or the words spoken, or doubt of their being evil. The word (thinketh) does not refer, either to our seeing or hearing, or to the first and involuntary acts of our understanding: but to our willingly thinking what we need not: our inferring evil, where it does not appear: to our reasoning concerning things which we do not see; our supposing what we have neither seen nor heard. This is what true love absolutely destroys. It tears up, root and branch, all imagining what we have not known. It casts out all jealousies, all evil surmisings, all readiness to believe evil. It is frank, open, unsuspecting; and as it cannot design, so neither does it fear evil.

12. It rejoiceth not in iniquity: common as this is, even among those who bear the name of Christ; who scruple not to rejoice over their enemy, when he falleth either into affliction, or error, or sin. Indeed how hardly can they avoid this, who are zealously attached to any party? How difficult is it for them not to be pleased with any fault which they discover in those of the opposite party? With any real or supposed blemish, either in their principles or practice? What warm defender of any cause is clear of these? Yea, who is so calm as to be altogether free? Who does not rejoice when his adversary makes a false step, which he thinks will advantage his own cause? Only a man of love. He alone weeps over either the sin or folly of his enemy, takes no pleasure in hearing or repeating it, but rather desires that it may be forgotten for ever.

13. But he rejoiceth in the truth, wheresoever it is found, in the truth which is after godliness, bringing forth its proper fruit, holiness of heart and holiness of conversation.— He rejoices to find, that even those who oppose him, whether with regard to opinions or some points of practice,



are nevertheless lovers of God, and in other respects un-reprovable. He is glad to hear good of them, and to speak all he can consistently with truth and justice. Indeed, good in general is his glory and joy, wherever diffused throughout the race of mankind. As a citizen of the world he claims a share in the happiness of all the inhabitants of it. Because he is a man, he is not unconcerned in the welfare of any man: but enjoys whatsoever brings glory to God, and promotes peace and good-will among men.

14. This love covereth all things. Because the merciful man rejoiceth not in iniquity, neither does he willingly make a mention of it. Whatever evil he sees, hears, or knows, he nevertheless conceals, so far as he can, without making himself partake of other men's sins. Wheresoever or with whomsoever he is, if he sees any thing which he approves not, it goes not out of his lips, unless to the person concerned, if haply he may gain his brother. So far is he from making the faults or failings of others the matter of his conversation, that of the absent he never does speak at all, unless he can speak well. A tale bearer, a backbiter, a whisperer, an evil-speaker, is to him all one as a murderer. He would just as soon cut his neighbour's throat as thus murder his reputation. Just as soon would he think of diverting himself by setting fire to his neighbor's house, as of thus scattering abroad arrows, firebrands, and death, and saying, am I not in sport?

He makes one only exception. Sometimes he is convinced, that it is for the glory of God, or (which comes to the same) the good of his neighbor, that an evil should not be covered. In this case, for the benefit of the innocent, he is constrained to declare the guilty. But even here, 1. He will not speak at all, till love, superior love constrains him. 2. He cannot do it from a general confused view of doing good, or promoting the glory of God, but from a clear sight of some particular end, some determinate good which he pursues. 3. Still he cannot speak, unless he be fully convinced, that this very means is necessary to that end; that the end cannot be answered, at least not so effectually, by any other way. 4. He then doth it with the utmost sorrow and reluctance, using it as the last and worst medicine, a desperate remedy in a desperate case, a kind of poison never to be used but to expel poison. Consequently, 5. He

uses it as sparingly as possible. And this he does with fear and trembling, lest he should transgress the law of love by speaking too much, more than he would have done by not speaking at all.

15. Love believeth all things\*. It is always willing to think the best ; to put the most favourable construction on every thing. It is ever ready to believe whatever may tend to the advantage of any one's character. It is easily convinced of (what he earnestly desires) the innocence or integrity of any man ; or, at least, of the sincerity of his repentance, if he had once erred from the way. It is glad to excuse whatever is amiss ; to condemn the offender as little as possible, and to make all the allowance for human weakness which can be done, without betraying the truth of God.

16. And when it can no longer believe, then love hopeth all things. Is any evil related of any man ? Love hopes, that the relation is not true, that the thing related was never done. Is it certain it was ? - " But perhaps it was not done with such circumstances as are related ; so that, allowing the fact, there is room to hope it was not so ill as it is represented." Was the action apparently, undeniably evil ? Love hopes the intention was not so. Is it clear, the design was evil too ? " Yet might it not spring from the settled temper of the heart : But from a start of passion, or from some vehement temptation, which hurried the man beyond himself." And even when it cannot be doubted, but all the actions, designs, and tempers are equally evil ; still love hopes that God will at last make bare his arm, and get himself the victory ; and that there shall be joy in heaven over this one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.

17. Lastly, It endureth all things. This completes the character of him that is truly merciful. He endureth not some, not many things only, not most, but absolutely all things. Whatever the injustice, the malice, the cruelty of men, can inflict, he is able to suffer. He calls nothing intolerable ; he never says of any thing, " This is not to be borne." No ; he can, not only do, but suffer all things through Christ which strengtheneth him. And all he suffers does not destroy his love, nor impair it in the least. It is proof against all. It is a flame that burns even in the

midst of the great deep. Many waters cannot quench his love, neither can the floods drown it. It triumphs over all. It never faileth, either in time or eternity.

“ In obedience to what heaven decrees,  
 Knowledge shall fail, and prophecy shall cease.  
 But lasting Charity’s more ample sway,  
 Nor bound by time, nor subject to decay,  
 In happy triumph shall for ever live,  
 And endless good diffuse, and endless praise receive.”

So shall the merciful obtain mercy : not only by the blessing of God, upon all their ways, by his now repaying the love they bear to their brethren, a thousand fold into their own bosom : but likewise by an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, in the kingdom prepared for them from the beginning of the world.

18. For a little while you may say, Wo is me that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech, and to have my habitation among the tents of Kedar ! You may pour out your soul, and bemoan the loss of true, genuine love in the earth.— Lost indeed ! You may well say, (but not in the ancient sense) “ See how these christians love one another !” These christian kingdoms, that are tearing out each other’s bowels desolating one another with fire and sword ! These christian armies, that are sending each other by thousands, by ten thousands quick into hell ! These christain nations, that are all on fire with intestine broils, party against party, faction against faction ! These christians cities, where deceit and fraud, oppression and wrong, yea, robbery and murder go not out of their streets ! These christian families, torn asunder with envy, jealousy, anger, domestic jars, without number, without end ! Yea, what is most dreadful, most to be lamented of all, these christian churches !— Churches, (tell it not in Gath—but alas, how can we hide it, either from Jews, Turks, or Pagans ?) that bear the name of Christ the Prince of peace, and wage continual war with each other ! That convert sinners by burning them alive ; that are drunk with the blood of saints ! Does this praise belong only to Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and the abominations of the earth ? Nay, verily : but reformed churches (so called) have fairly learned to tread

in her steps. Protestant churches too know to persecute, when they have power in their hands, even unto blood.— And mean while, how do they also anathematize each other! Devote each other to the nethermost hell! What wrath, what contention, what malice, what bitterness, is every where found among them? Even where they agree in essentials, and only differ in opinions, or in the circumstantial of religion. Who follows after only the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another? O God! How long shall thy promise fail? Fear it not, ye little flock. Against hope believe in hope. It is your Father's good pleasure, yet to renew the face of the earth. Surely all these things shall come to an end, and the inhabitants of the earth shall learn righteousness. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they know war any more. The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains: and all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdom of our God. They shall not then hurt or destroy, in all his holy mountain: but they shall call their walls salvation, and their gates praise. They shall all be without spot or blemish, loving one another, even as Christ hath loved us. Be thou part of the first-fruits, if the harvest is not yet. Do thou love thy neighbor as thyself. The Lord God fill thy heart with such a love to every soul, that thou mayest be ready to laydown thy life for his sake! May thy soul continually overflow with love, swallowing up every unkind and unholy temper, till he calleth thee up into the region of love, there to reign with him for ever and ever!

## SERMON III.

*Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount.*

## DISCOURSE III.

MATTHEW v. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

*Blessed are the pure in heart ; for they shall see God.*

*Blessed are the peace-makers ; for they shall be called the children of God.*

*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness-sake ; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.*

*Rejoice and be exceeding glad ; for great is your reward in heaven : for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

I. 1. **H**OW excellent things are spoken of the love of our neighbor ! It is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment. Without this, all we have, all we do, all we suffer, is of no value in the sight of God.— But is that love of our neighbor which springs from the love of God : Otherwise itself is nothing worth. It behoves us therefore to examine well upon what foundation our love of our neighbor stands : Whether it is really built upon the love of God ? Whether we do love him, because he first loved us ? Whether we are pure in heart ? For this is the foundation, which shall never be moved. Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God.

2. The pure in heart are they, whose hearts God hath purified, even as he is pure ; who are purified through faith in the blood of Jesus, from every unholy affliction ; who being cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfect holiness in the loving fear of God. They are, through the power of his grace, purified from pride, by the deepest poverty of spirit ; from every unkind or turbulent passion, by meekness and gentleness : from every desire but to please and enjoy God, to know and love him more and more, by

that hunger and thirst after righteousness, which now engross their whole soul: so that now they love the Lord their God, with all their heart, and with all their soul, and mind, and strength.

3. But how little has this purity of heart been regarded, by the false teachers of all ages? They have taught men barely, to abstain from such outward impurities, as God hath forbidden by name. But they did not strike at the heart; and by not guarding against, they in effect, countenanced inward corruptions.

A remarkable instance of this, our Lord has given us, in the following words: Ye have heard, that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery. And in explaining this, those blind leaders of the blind, only insist on men's abstaining from the outward act. But I say unto you, whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart, for God requireth truth in the inward parts. He searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins. And if thou incline unto iniquity with thy heart, the Lord will not hear thee.

4. And God admits no excuse for retaining any thing, which is an occasion of impurity. Therefore if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell, ver. 29. If persons as dear to thee as thy right eye, be an occasion of thy thus offending God, a means of exciting unholily desire in thy soul; delay not; forcibly separate from them. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell, ver. 30. If any who seem as necessary to thee as thy right hand, be an occasion of sin, of impure desire; even though it were never to go beyond the heart, never to break out in word or action: constrain thyself to an entire and final parting: cut them off at a stroke; give them up to God. Any loss, whether of pleasure, or substance, or friends, is preferable to the loss of thy soul.

Two steps only it may not be improper to take, before such an absolute and final separation. First, try whether the unclean spirit may not be driven out by fasting and pray-

er, and by carefully abstaining from every action, and word, and look, which thou hast found to be an occasion of evil. Secondly, if thou art not by this means delivered, ask counsel of him that watcheth over thy soul, or at least of some who have experience in the ways of God, touching the time and manner of that separation. But confer not with flesh and blood, lest thou be given up to a strong delusion to believe a lie.

5. Nor may marriage itself; holy and honourable as it is, be used, as a pretence for giving a loose to our desires. Indeed, it hath been said, whosoever will put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement. And then all was well, though he alledged no cause, but that he did not like her; or liked another better. But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication (that is adultery; the word *porneia* signifying unchastity in general, either in the married or unmarried state) causeth her to commit adultery; if she marry again; and whosoever shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery, ver. 31, 32.

All polygamy is clearly forbidden in these words, wherein our Lord expressly declares, That for any woman who has a husband alive, to marry again, is adultery. By parity of reason, it is adultery for any man to marry again, so long as he has a wife alive. Yea, although they were divorced: unless that divorce had been for the cause of adultery. In that only case, there is no scripture, which forbids to marry again.

6. Such is the purity of heart which God requires, and works in those who believe on the son of his love. And blessed are they who are thus pure in heart. For they shall see God. He will manifest himself unto them, not only as he doth not unto the world, but as he doth not always to his own children. He will bless them with the clearest communications of his spirit, the most intimate fellowship with the father and the son. He will cause his presence to go continually before them, and the light of his countenance to shine upon them. It is the ceaseless prayer of their heart, I beseech thee shew me thy glory: and they have the petition they ask of him. They now see him by faith (the veil of flesh being made, as it were, transparent) even in these his lowest works, in all that surrounds them, in all that God

has created and made. They see him in the height above; in the depth beneath; they see him filling all in all.

The pure in heart see all things full of God. They see him in the firmament of heaven, in the moon, walking in brightness, in the sun when he rejoiceth as a giant to run his course. They see him making the clouds his chariots, and walking upon the wings of the wind. They see him preparing rain for the earth, and blessing the increase of it; giving grass for the cattle, and green herb for the use of man. They see the creator of all, wisely governing all, and upholding all things by the word of his power. O Lord, our governor! How excellent is thy name in all the world!

7. In all his providences relating to themselves, to their souls or bodies, the pure in heart do more particularly see God. They see his hand ever over them for good; giving them all things in weight and measure, numbering the hairs of their head, making a hedge round about them and all that they have, and disposing all the circumstances of their life, according to the depth both of his wisdom and mercy.

8. But in a more especial manner, they see God in his ordinances. Whether they appear in the great congregation, to pay him the honor due unto his name, and worship him in the beauty of holiness; or enter into their closets, and there pour out their souls before their father which is in secret: whether they search the oracles of God, or hear the ambassadors of Christ proclaiming glad tidings of salvation; or by eating of that bread, and drinking of that cup, "shew forth his death till he come" in the clouds of heaven: in all these his appointed ways, they find such a near approach as cannot be expressed. They see him, as it were, face to face, and "talk with him, as a man talketh with his friend;" a fit preparation for those mansions above, wherein they shall see him as he is.

9. But how far were they from seeing God, who having "heard, that it had been said by them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:" interpreted it thus, thou shalt not forswear thyself, when thou swearest by the Lord Jehovah. Thou "shalt perform unto the Lord these thine oaths." But as to other oaths, he regardeth them not.

So the Pharisees taught. They not only allowed all man-



ner of swearing in common conversation : but accounted even forswearing a little thing, so they had not sworn by the peculiar name of God.

But our Lord here absolutely forbids all common swearing, as well as false swearing : and shews the heinousness of both, by the same awful consideration, that every creature is God's, and he is every where present, in all, and over all.

“ I say unto you, swear not at all : neither by heaven, for it is God's throne.” And therefore this is the same as to swear by him who sitteth upon the circle of the heavens : “ nor by the earth, for it is his footstool ;” and he is as intimately present in earth as heaven : “ neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king, and God is well known in her palaces. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black :” because even this, it is plain, is not thine but God's, the sole disposer of all in heaven and earth. “ But let your communication,” your conversation, your discourse with each other, “ be yea, yea ; nay, nay :” a bare, serious affirming or denying ; for “ whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil : is of the evil one ;” proceedeth from the devil, and is a mark of his children.

10. That our Lord does not here, forbid the “ swearing in judgment and truth,” when we are required so to do by a magistrate, may appear, 1. From the occasion of this part of his discourse, the abuse he was here reprovng, which was false swearing and common swearing ; the swearing before a magistrate being quite out of the question. 2. From the very words wherein he forms the general conclusion, “ let your communication,” or discourse, “ be yea, yea ; nay, nay.” 3. From his own example ; for he answered himself upon oath, when required by a magistrate. When “ the high priest said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us, whether thou be the Christ the son of God ?” Jesus immediately answered in the affirmative, “ thou hast said” (i. e. the truth.) “ Nevertheless” (or rather “ moreover) I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” 4. From the example of God, even the Father, who “ willing the more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immuta-

bility of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath." 5. From the example of St. Paul, who, we "think had the spirit of God," and well understood the mind of his master. "God is my witness," said he, to the Romans, "that without ceasing, I make mention of you always in my prayers:" to the Corinthians, "I call God to record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth:" and to the Philippians, "God is my record, how greatly I long after you, in the bowels of Jesus Christ." (Hence it unleniably appears, that if the apostle knew the meaning of his lord's words, they do not forbid swearing on weighty occasions, even to one another: how much less before a magistrate?) And lastly, from that assertion of the great apostle, concerning solemn swearing in general, (which it is impossible he could have mentioned without any touch of blame, if his Lord has totally forbidden it). "Men verily swear by the greater," (by one greater than themselves) "and an oath for confirmation is to them the end of all strife."

11. But the great lesson which our blessed Lord inculcates here, and which he illustrates by this example, is, that God is in all things, and that we are to see the creator in the glass of every creature; that we should use and look upon nothing as separate from God, which indeed is a kind of practical atheism; but with a true magnificence of thought, survey heaven and earth, and all that is therein, as contained by God in the hollow of his hand, who by his intimate presence holds them all in being who pervades and actuates the whole created frame, and is, in a true sense, the soul of the universe.

II. 1. Thus far our Lord has been more directly employed, in teaching the religion of the heart. He has shewn what christians are to be. He proceeds to shew what they are to do also: how inward holiness is to exert itself, in our outward conversation. Blessed, saith he, are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God.

2. The peace-makers: The word in the original is *oi eirenopoioi*. It is well known that *eirene* in the sacred writings, implies all manner of good; every blessing that relates either to the soul or the body, to time or eternity. Accordingly when St. Paul, in the titles of his epistles, wishes grace and peace to the Romans or the Corinthians, it is as if he had said, "as a fruit of the free, undeserved love and

favor of God, may you enjoy all blessings, spiritual and temporal, all the good things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

3. Hence we may easily learn, in how wide a sense the term, peace-makers is to be understood. In its literal meaning it implies, those lovers of God and man, who utterly detest and abhor all strife and debate, all variance and contention: and accordingly labor with all their might, either to prevent this fire of hell from being kindled, or when it is kindled, from breaking out, or when it is broke out, from spreading any farther. They endeavor to calm the stormy spirits of men, to quiet their turbulent passions, to soften the minds of contending parties, and, if possible, reconcile them to each other. They use all innocent arts, and employ all their strength, all the talents which God has given them, as well to preserve peace, where it is, as to restore it, where it is not. It is the joy of their heart, to promote, to confirm, to increase mutual good will among men: but more especially among the children of God, however distinguished by things of smaller importance; that as they have all one Lord, one faith; as they are all called in one hope of their calling, so they may all walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called: with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace.

4. But in the full extent of the word, a peace-maker is one, as he hath opportunity, doth good unto all men: one that being filled with the love of God and of all mankind, cannot confine the expressions of it to his own family, or friends, or acquaintance or party: or to those of his own opinions: no, nor those who are partakers of like precious faith: but steps over all these narrow bounds that he may do good to every man: that he may some way or other manifest his love to neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies. He doth good to them all, as he hath opportunity, that is, on every possible occasion: redeeming the time in order thereto, buying up every opportunity, improving every hour, losing no moment wherein he may profit another. He does good, not to one particular kind, but good in general: in every possible way, employing herein all his talents of every kind; all his powers and faculties of body

and soul; all his fortune, his interest, his reputation; desiring only, that when his Lord cometh he may say, "well done, good and faithful servant!"

5. He doth good, to the uttermost of his power, even to the bodies of all men. He rejoices to deal his bread to the hungry, and to cover the naked with a garment. Is any a stranger? He takes him in, and relieves him according to his necessities. Are any sick or in prison? He visits them, and administers such help as they stand most in need of. — And all this he does, not as unto man; but remembering him that hath said, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

6. How much more does he rejoice, if he can do any good to the soul of any man? This power indeed belongeth unto God. It is he only that changes the heart, without which every other change is lighter than vanity. Nevertheless it pleases him who worketh all in all, to help man chiefly by man; to convey his own power and blessing and love, through one man to another. Therefore, altho' it be certain, that the help which is done upon earth, God doth it himself, yet has no man need, on this account, to stand idle in his vineyard. The peace-maker cannot: he is ever laboring therein, and as an instrument in God's hand, preparing the ground for his master's use, or sowing the seed of the kingdom, or watering what is already sown, if haply God may give the increase. According to the measure of grace which he has received, he uses all diligence, either to reprove the gross sinner, to reclaim those who run on headlong in the broad way to destruction; or to give light to, them that sit in darkness, and are ready to perish for lack of knowledge; or to support the weak, to lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees; or to bring back and heal that which was lame and turned out of the way. Nor is he less zealous to confirm those who are already striving to enter in at the strait gate; to strengthen those that stand, that they may run with patience the race which is set before them; to build up in their most holy faith, those that know in whom they have believed: to exhort them to stir up the gift of God which is in them, that daily growing in grace, an entrance may be ministered unto them abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ.

7. Blessed are they who are thus continually employed, in the work of faith, and the labor of love. For they shall be called, that is, shall be (a common Hebraism) the children of God. God shall continue unto them the spirit of adoption, yea, shall pour it more abundantly into their hearts. He shall bless them with all the blessings of his children. He shall acknowledge them as sons before angels and men; and if sons, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

III. 1. One would imagine such a person as has been above described, so full of genuine humility, so unaffectedly serious, so mild and gentle, so free from all selfish design, so devoted to God, and such an active lover of men, should be the darling of mankind. But our Lord was better acquainted with human nature, in its present state. He therefore closes the character of this man of God, with shewing him the treatment he is to expect in the world. Blessed saith he, are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

2. In order to understand this thoroughly, let us first enquire, who are they that are persecuted? And this we may easily learn from St. Paul: "as of old, he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now. Yea, saith the apostle, "and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." The same we are taught by St. John. "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." As if he had said, the brethren, the christians cannot be loved, but by them who have passed from death unto life. And most expressly by our Lord: "if the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hatech you. Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."

By all these scriptures it manifestly appears, who they are that are persecuted: namely, the righteous, he that is born after the spirit; all that will live godly in Christ Jesus: they that are passed from death unto life; those who are not of the world: all those who are meek and lowly in heart

that mourn for God, that hunger after his likeness ; all that love God and their neighbor, and therefore, as they have opportunity, do good unto all men.

3. If it be, secondly enquired, why they are persecuted ? The answer is equally plain and obvious. It is for righteousness sake ; because they are righteous ; because they are born after the spirit ; because they will live godly in Christ Jesus ; because they are not of the world. Whatever may be pretended, this is the real cause : be their infirmities more or less, still if it were not for this, they would be born with, and the world would love its own. They are persecuted, because they are poor in spirit, that is, say the world, “ poor-spirited, mean, dastardly souls, good for nothing, not fit to live in the world :” because they mourn ; they are such dull, heavy, lumpish creatures, enough to sink any one’s spirits that sees them : they are mere death-heads, they kill innocent mirth, and spoil company wherever they come :” Because they are meek ; “ tame, passive fools, just fit to be trampled upon :” because they hunger and thirst after righteousness ; “ a parcel of hot-brained enthusiasts, gaping after they know not what, not content with rational religion, but running mad after raptures and inward feelings :” because they are merciful, lovers of all, lovers of the evil and unthankful ; “ encouraging all manner of wickedness, nay, tempting people to do mischief by impunity : and men who, it is to be feared, have their own religion still to seek ; very loose in their principles :” because they are pure in heart : “ uncharitable creatures ! That damn all the world, but those that are of their own sort ! Blasphemous wretches, that pretend to make God a liar, to live without sin !” Above all, because they are peace-makers, because they take all opportunities of doing good to all men. This is the grand reason why they have been persecuted in all ages, and will be till the restitution of all things.

“ If they would but keep their religion to themselves, it would be tolerable. But it is this spreading their errors, this infecting so many others, which is not to be endured. They do so much mischief in the world, that they ought to be tolerated no longer. It is true, the men do some things well enough ; they relieve some of the poor. But this too, is only done to gain the more of their party ; and so, in effect, to do the more mischief.” Thus the men of the world

sincerely think and speak. And the more the kingdom of God prevails, the more the peace-makers are enabled to propagate lowliness, meekness, and all other divine tempers; the more mischief is done, in their account. Consequently, the more are they enraged, against the authors of this, and the more vehemently will they persecute them.

4. Let us thirdly enquire, who are they that persecute them? St. Paul answers, he that is born after the flesh; every one who is not born of the spirit, or at least, desirous so to be: all that do not, at least, labor to live godly in Christ Jesus: all that are not passed from death unto life, and consequently cannot love the brethren: the world, that is, according to our saviour's account, they who know not him that sent me: they who know not God, even the loving, pardoning God, by the teaching of his own spirit.

The reason is plain. The spirit which is in the world is directly opposite to the Spirit which is of God. It must therefore needs be, that those who are of the world, will be opposite to those who are of God. There is the utmost contrariety between them, in all their opinions, their desires, designs, and tempers. And hitherto the leopard and the kid, cannot lie down in peace together. The proud, because he is proud, cannot but persecute the lowly: the light and airy, those that mourn: and so in every other kind; the unlikeness of disposition, (were there no other) being a perpetual ground of enmity, therefore (were it only on this account) all the servants of the devil, will persecute the children of God.

5. Should it be enquired, fourthly, how they will persecute them? It may be answered in general, just in that manner and measure which the wise disposer of all, sees will be most for his glory; will tend most to his children's growth in grace, and the enlargement of his own kingdom. There is no one branch of God's government of the world, which is more to be admired than this. His ear is never heavy to the threatnings of the persecutor, or the cry of the persecuted. His eye is ever open, and his hand stretched out, to direct every the minutest circumstance. When the storm shall begin, how high it shall rise, which way it shall point its course, when and how it shall end, are all determined by his unerring wisdom. The ungodly are only a sword of his: an instrument which he uses, as it pleaseth

him, and which itself, when the gracious ends of his providence are answered, is cast into the fire.

At some rare times, as when Christianity was planted first, and while it was taking root in the earth; as also when the pure doctrine of Christ began to be planted again in our nation; God permitted the storm to rise high, and his children were called to resist unto blood. There was a peculiar reason why he suffered this with regard to the apostles, that their evidence might be the more unexceptionable. But from the annals of the church, we learn another, and a far different reason, why he suffered the heavy persecutions which arose in the second and third centuries: namely, because the mystery of iniquity did so strongly work, because of the monstrous corruptions which even then reigned in the church: these God chastised, and at the same time strove to heal, by those severe but necessary visitations. Perhaps the same observation may be made, with regard to the grand persecution in our own land. God had dealt very graciously with our nation; he had poured out various blessings upon us. He had given us peace abroad and at home; and a king, wise and good beyond his years. And above all, he had caused the pure light of his gospel, to arise and shine amongst us. But what return did he find? He looked for righteousness. But behold a cry! A cry of oppression and wrong, of ambition and injustice, of malice, and fraud, covetousness. Yea, the cry of those who even then expired in the flames entered into the ears of the Lord of sabbath. It was then God arose to maintain his own cause, against those that held the truth in unrighteousness. Then he sold them into the hands of their persecutors, by a judgment mixt with mercy: an affliction to punish, and yet a medicine to heal the grievous backslidings of his people.

6. But it is seldom God suffers the storm to rise so high, as torture, or death, or bonds, or imprisonment. Whereas his children are frequently called to endure those lighter kinds of persecution; they frequently suffer the estrangement of kinsfolk; the loss of their friends that were as their own soul. They find the truth of their Lord's word (concerning the event, though not the design of his coming) suppose ye that I am come to give peace upon the earth? I tell you nay; but rather division. And hence will naturally follow loss of business or employment, and conse-



quently of substance. But all these circumstances likewise are under the wise direction of God, who allots to every one what is most expedient for him.

7. But the persecution which attends all the children of God, is that our Lord describes in the following words. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, (shall persecute, by reviling you) and say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake. This cannot fail: it is the very badge of our discipleship: it is one of the seals of our calling. It is a sure portion, entailed on all the children of God: if we have it not, we are bastards and not sons. Strait thro' evil report, as well as good report, lies the only way to the kingdom. The meek, serious, humble, zealous lovers of God and man, are of good report among their brethren; but of evil report with the world, who count and treat them as the filth and off-scouring of all things.

8. Indeed some have supposed, that before the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, the scandal of the cross will cease: that God will cause christians to be esteemed and loved, even by those who are as yet in their sins. Yea, and sure it is, that even now, he at some times suspends the contempt as well as the fierceness of men: he makes a man's enemies to be at peace with him for a season, and gives him favour with his bitterest persecutors. But setting aside this exempt case, the scandal of the cross is not yet ceased: but a man may say still, if I please men, I am not the servant of Christ: let no man therefore regard that pleasing suggestion (pleasing doubtless to flesh and blood) "that bad men only pretend to hate and despise them that are good, but do indeed love and esteem them in their hearts." Not so: they may employ them sometimes; but it is for their own profit. They may put confidence in them: for they know their ways are not like other men's. But still they love them not: unless so far as the spirit of God may be striving with them. Our Saviour's words are express: if ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Yea, (setting aside what exceptions may be made by the preventing grace or the peculiar providence of God) it hateth them as cordially and sincerely, as ever it did their master.

9. It remains only to enquire, how are the children of God to behave, with regard to persecution? And first, they ought not, knowingly or designedly, to bring it upon themselves. This is contrary both to the example and advice of our Lord and all his apostles; who teach us not only not to seek, but to avoid it, as far as we can, without injuring our conscience; without giving up any part of that righteousness, which we are to prefer before life itself. So our Lord expressly, When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: which is indeed, when it can be taken, the most unexceptionable way of avoiding persecution.

10. Yet think not, that you can always avoid it, either by this, or any other means. If ever that idle imagination steals into your heart, put it to flight by that earnest caution, remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But will this screen you from persecution? Not unless you have more wisdom than your master, or more innocence than the Lamb of God.

Neither desire to avoid it, to escape it wholly; for if you do, you are none of his. If you escape the persecution, you escape the blessing of those who are persecuted for righteousness sake. If you are not persecuted for righteousness sake, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him. But if we deny him, he will also deny us.

11. Nay, rather, rejoice and be exceeding glad, when men persecute you for his sake: when they persecute you by reviling you, and by saying all manner of evil against you falsely; (which they will not fail to mix with every kind of persecution; they must blacken you to excuse themselves.) For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you, those who were most eminently holy in heart and life; yea, and all the righteous which ever have been from the beginning of the world. Rejoice, because by this mark also, ye know unto whom ye belong. And because great is your reward in heaven: the reward purchased by the blood of the covenant, and freely bestowed in proportion to your sufferings, as well as to your holiness of heart and life. Be exceeding glad; knowing that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

12. Mean time, let no persecution turn you out of the way of lowliness and meekness, of love and beneficence. Ye have heard indeed that it hath been said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. And your miserable teachers have hence allowed you to avenge yourselves, to return evil for evil.

But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil. Not thus; not by returning it in kind. But (rather than do this) whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

So invincible let thy meekness be. And be thy love suitable thereto. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away. Only give not away that which is another man's, that which is not thine own. Therefore, 1. Take care to owe no man any thing. For what thou owest, is not thy own but another man's. 2. Provide for those of thine own household.— This also God hath required of thee, and what is necessary to sustain them in life and godliness, is also not thine own. Then, 3. Give or lend all that remains from day to day, or from year to year. Only first, seeing thou canst not give or lend to all, remember the household of faith.

13. The meekness and love we do feel, the kindness we are to shew to them which persecute us for righteousness sake, our blessed Lord describes farther in the following verses. O that they were graven upon our hearts!

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thy enemy. (God indeed had said only the former part, Thou shalt love thy neighbor. The children of the devil had added the latter, and hate thy enemy.) But I say unto you, 1. love your enemies. See that you bear a tender good-will, to those who are most bitter of spirit against you, who wish you all manner of evil. 2. Bless them that curse you. Are there any whose bitterness of spirit breaks forth in bitter words? Who are continually cursing and reproaching you when you are present, and saying all evil against you when absent? So much the rather do you bless. In conversing with them, use all mildness and softness of language. Reprove them, by repeating a better lesson before them, by shewing them how

they ought to have spoken. And in speaking of them, say all the good you can, without violating the rules of truth and justice. 3. Do good to them that hate you. Let your actions shew, that you are as real in love as they in hatred. Return good for evil. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. 4. If you can do nothing more, at least pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you. You can never be disabled from doing this; nor can all their malice or violence hinder you. Pour out your souls to God, not only for those, who did this once, but now repent. This is a little thing. If thy brother seven times a day, turn, and say unto thee, I repent; that is, if after ever so many relapses, he give thee reason to believe, that he is really and thoroughly changed, then thou shalt forgive him, so as to trust him, to put him in thy bosom, as if he had never sinned against thee at all. But pray for, wrestle with God, for those that do not repent, that now despitefully use thee and persecute thee. Thus far forgive them, not until seven times only, but until seventy times seven. Whether they repent or no, yea though they appear farther and farther from it, yet shew them this instance of kindness: that ye may be the children, that ye may approve yourselves the genuine children of your father which is in heaven, who shews his goodness by giving such blessings as they are capable of, even to his stubbornest enemies; "who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust, for if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the Publicans the same?" Who pretend to no religion: whom ye yourselves acknowledge to be without God in the world. And if ye salute, shew kindness in word or deed, to your brethren, your friends or kinsfolk only: what do ye more than others? Than those who have no religion at all? Do not even the Publicans so? Nay, but follow ye a better pattern than them. In patience, in long-suffering, in mercy, in beneficence of every kind, to all, even to your bitterest persecutors: Be ye, christians, perfect (in kind, though not in degree) even as your father which is in heaven is perfect.

III. Behold christianity in its native form! as delivered by its great author! This is the genuine religion of Jesus

Christ. Such he presents it to him whose eyes are opened. See a picture of God, so far as he is imitable by man! A picture drawn by God's own hand! "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish!" Or rather, wonder and adore! Rather cry out, is this the religion of Jesus of Nazareth? The religion which I persecuted! Let me no more be found even to fight against God. Lord, what wouldst thou have me do? What beauty appears in the whole! How just a symmetry! What exact proportion in every part! How desirable is the happiness here described? How venerable, how lovely the holiness? This is the spirit of religion: the quintessence of it. These are indeed the fundamentals of christianity. O that we may not be hearers of it only! "Like a man beholding his own face in a glass, who goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." Nay, but let us steadily look into this perfect law of liberty, and continue therein. Let us not rest until every line thereof is transcribed into our own hearts. Let us watch, and pray, and believe, and love, and strive for the mastery, till every part of it shall appear in our soul, graven there by the finger of God: till we are holy as he which hath called us is holy, perfect as our father which is in heaven is perfect!

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## SERMON IV.

*Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount.*

## DISCOURSE IV.

MATTHEW v. 13, 14, 15, 16.

*Ye are the salt of the earth. But if the salt hath lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men.*

*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid*

*Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel; but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.*

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven.*

1. **T**HE beauty of holiness, of that inward man of the heart, which is renewed after the image of God, cannot but strike every eye which God hath opened, every enlightened understanding. The ornament of a meek, humble, loving spirit, will at least excite the approbation of all those who are capable, in any degree, of discerning spiritual good and evil. From the hour men begin to emerge out of the darkness which covers the giddy, unthinking world, they cannot but perceive how desirable a thing it is, to be thus transformed into the likeness of him that created us. This inward religion bears the shape of God, so visibly imprest upon it, that a soul must be wholly immersed in flesh and blood, when he can doubt of its divine original. We may say of this, in a secondary sense, even as of the son of God himself, that it is the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person: *apauqasma aes doxee autou*: The beaming forth of his eternal glory; and yet so tempered and softened, that even the children of men, may herein see God and live: *charakter tes uposaseos autou*. The character, the stamp, the living impression, of his person, who is the fountain of beauty and love, the original source of all excellency and perfection.

2. If religion, therefore, were carried no farther than this, they could have no doubt concerning it: They should have no objection against pursuing it with the whole ardor of their souls. But why, say they, is it clogged with other things? What need of loading it with doing and suffering? These are what damps the vigour of the soul, and sinks it down to earth again. Is it not enough to follow after charity? To soar upon the wings of love? Will it not suffice, to worship God who is a spirit, with the spirit of our minds, without incumbering ourselves with outward things, or even thinking of them at all? Is it not better, that the whole extent of our thought should be taken up with high and heavenly contemplation? And that instead of busying ourselves at all about externals, we should only commune with God in our hearts?

3. Many eminent men have spoken thus: have advised us "to cease from all outward action;" wholly to withdraw from the world; to leave the body behind us; to abstract ourselves from all sensible things: To have no concern at all about outward religion, but to "work all virtues in the will," as the far more excellent way, more perfect of the soul, as well as more acceptable to God.

4. It needed not that any should tell our Lord, of this master-piece of the wisdom from beneath! This fairest of all the devices wherewith satan hath ever perverted the right ways of the Lord. And O! what instruments hath he found from time to time, to employ in this his service! To wield this grand engine of hell, against some of the most important truths of God! Men that would deceive, if it were possible, the very elect; the men of faith and love: Yea, that have for a season deceived and led away no inconsiderable number of them; who have fallen in all ages into the gilded snare, and hardly escape with the skin of their teeth.

5. But has our Lord been wanting on his part! Has he not sufficiently guarded us against this pleasing delusion? Has he not armed us here with armour of proof against satan, transformed into an angel of light? Yea, verily: He here defends, in the clearest and strongest manner, the active, patient religion he had just described: What can be fuller and plainer than the words he immediately subjoins, to what he had said of doing and suffering? "Ye are the

salt of the earth. But if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world: A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel; but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

In order fully to explain and enforce these important words, I shall endeavor to shew, first, that christianity is essentially a social religion, and that to turn it into a solitary one, is to destroy it: Secondly, that to conceal this religion is impossible, as well as utterly contrary to the design of its author. I shall, thirdly, Answer some objections; and conclude the whole with a practical application.

**I. 1.** First, I shall endeavor to shew, that christianity is essentially a social religion; and that to turn it into a solitary religion, is indeed to destroy it.

By Christianity I mean, that method of worshipping God, which is here revealed to man by Jesus Christ. When I say, this is essentially a social religion, I mean not only, that it cannot subsist so well, but that it cannot subsist at all without society, without living and conversing with other men. And in shewing this, I shall confine myself to these considerations, which will arise from the very discourse before us. But if this be shewn, then doubtless to turn this religion into a solitary one, is to destroy it.

Not that we can in any wise condemn, the intermixing solitude or retirement with society. This is not only allowable, but expedient: Nay, it is necessary, as daily experience shews, for every one that either already is, or desires to be a real christian. It can hardly be that we should spend one entire day, in a continued intercourse with men, without suffering loss in our soul, and in some measure grieving the holy spirit of God. We have need daily to retire from the world, at least, morning and evening, to converse with God, to commune more freely with our Father which is in secret. Nor indeed can a man of experience condemn, even longer seasons of religious retirement, so they do not imply any neglect of the wordly employ, wherein the providence of God has placed us.



2. Yet such retirement must not swallow up all our time ; this would be to destroy, not advance true religion. For, that the religion described by our Lord in the foregoing words, cannot subsist without society, without our living and conversing with other men, is manifest from hence, that several of the most essential branches thereof, can have no place, if we have no intercourse with the world.

3. There is no disposition (for instance) which is more essential to christianity than meekness. Now although this, as it implies resignation to God, or patience in pain and sickness, may subsist in a desert, in a hermit's cell, in total solitude ; yet as it implies (which it no less necessarily does) mildness, gentleness, and long-suffering, it cannot possibly have a being, it has no place under heaven, without an intercourse with other men. So that to attempt turning this into a solitary virtue, is to destroy it from the face of the earth.

4. Another necessary branch of true christianity, is peace-making, or doing good. That this is equally essential with any of the other parts of the religion of Jesus Christ, there can be no stronger argument to evince (and therefore it would be absurd to allege any other) than that it is here inserted in the original plan he has laid down, of the fundamentals of his religion. Therefore to set aside this, is the same daring insult on the authority of our great master, as to set aside mercifulness, purity of heart, or any other branch of his institution. But this is apparently set aside, by all who call us to the wilderness ; who recommend entire solitude either to the babes, or the young men, or the fathers in Christ. For will any man affirm, that a solitary christian (so called, though it is little less than a contradiction in terms) can be a merciful man ? That is, one that takes every opportunity of doing all good to all men ? What can be more plain, than that this fundamental branch of the religion of Jesus Christ, cannot possibly subsist without society, without our living and conversing with other men ?

5. But is it not expedient however (one might naturally ask) to converse with only good men ? Only with those whom we know to be meek and merciful ; holy of heart, and holy of life ? Is it not expedient to refrain from any conversation or intercourse, with men of the opposite char-

acter? Men who do not obey, perhaps do not believe, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? The advice of St. Paul to the christians at Corinth, may seem to favor this. "I wrote unto you in an epistle, not to company with fornicators." And it is certainly not adviseable so to company with them, or with any of the workers of iniquity, as to have any particular familiarity, or any strictness of friendship with them. To contract or continue an intimacy with any such, is no way expedient for a christian. It must necessarily expose him to abundance of dangers and snares, out of which he can have no reasonable hope of deliverance.

But the apostle does not forbid us, to have any intercourse at all, even with the men that know not God. For then, says he, ye must needs go out of the world, which he could never advise them to do. But he subjoins, "If any man, that is called a brother," that professes himself a christian, "be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a raeler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—Now I have written unto you not to keep company" with him; "with such an one, no not to eat." This must necessarily imply, that we break off all familiarity, all intimacy of acquaintance with them. "Yet count him not," saith the apostle elsewhere, "as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother:" plainly shewing, that even in such a case as this, we are not to renounce all fellowship with him: so that here is no advice to separate wholly, even from wicked men. Yea, these very words teach us quite the contrary.

6. Much more the words of our Lord: who is so far from directing us, to break off all commerce with the world, that without it, according to his account of christianity, we cannot be christians at all. It would be easy to shew, that some intercourse, even with ungodly and unholy men, is absolutely needful, in order to the full exertion of every temper, which he has described as the way of the kingdom: that it is indispensably necessary, in order to the complete exercise of poverty of spirit, of mourning, and of every other disposition which has a place here, in the genuine religion of Jesus Christ. Yea it is necessary to the very being of several of them; of that meekness, for example, which, instead of demanding an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth, doth not resist evil; but causes us rather, when smitten on the right check, to turn the other also: of that mer-

cifulness, whereby we love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them which despitefully use us and persecute us: and of that complication of love and all holy tempers, which is exercised in suffering for righteousness sake. Now all these, it is clear, could have no being, were we to have no commerce with any but real christians.

7. Indeed were we wholly to separate ourselves from sinners, how could we possibly answer that character, which our Lord gives us in these very words: ye (christians, ye that are lowly, serious and meek; ye that hunger after righteousness, that love God and man, that do good to all, and therefore suffer evil: ye) are the salt of the earth. It is your very nature to season whatever is round about you. It is the nature of the divine Saviour which is in you, to spread to whatsoever you touch; to diffuse itself, on every side, to all those among whom you are. This is the great reason why the providence of God has so mingled you together with other men, that whatever grace you have received of God, may through you be communicated to others; that every holy temper, and word, and work of yours, may have an influence on them also. By this means a check will in some measure be given, to the corruption which is in the world; and a small part, at least, be saved from the general infection, and rendered holy and pure before God.

8. That we may the more diligently labor to season all we can, with every holy and heavenly temper, our Lord proceeds to shew the desperate state of those, who do not impart the religion they have received; which indeed they cannot possibly fail to do, so long as it remains in their own hearts. "If the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men." If ye who were holy and heavenly-minded, and consequently zealous of good works, have no longer that savour in yourselves, and do therefore no longer season others; if you are grown flat, insipid, dead, both careless of your own soul, and useless to the souls of other men, wherewith shall ye be salted? How shall ye be recovered? What help? What hope? Can tasteless salt be restored to its savour? No! it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, even as the mire in the streets, and to be trodden under foot of men, to be

overwhelmed with everlasting contempt. If ye had never known the Lord, there might have been hope, if ye had never been found in him. But what can ye now say to that his solemn declaration, just parallel to what he hath here spoken? "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he (the Father) taketh away. He that abideth in me, and I in him, bringeth forth much fruit. If a man abide not in me, (or, do not bring forth fruit) he is cast out as a branch and withered; and men gather them (not to plant them again, but) to cast them into the fire."

9. Toward those who have never tasted of the good word, God is indeed pitiful and of tender mercy. But justice takes place with regard to those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and have afterwards turned back from the holy commandment then delivered to them. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, in whose hearts God had once shined, to enlighten them with the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ; who have tasted of the heavenly gift, of redemption in his blood, the forgiveness of sins; and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, of lowliness, of meekness, and of the love of God and man, shed abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost which was given unto them: And have fallen away, *kai parapentesontas*. (Here is not a supposition, but a flat declaration of matter of fact) to renew them again unto repentance: Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

But that none may misunderstand these awful words, it should be carefully observed, 1. Who they are that are here spoken of; namely, they, and they only, who were once thus enlightened. They only who did taste of that heavenly gift, and were thus made partakers of the Holy Ghost. So that all who have not experienced these things, are wholly unconcerned in this scripture. 2. What that falling away is which is here<sup>e</sup> spoken of. It is an absolute, total apostacy. A believer may fall, and not fall away.— He may fall and rise again. And if he shall, even into sin, yet this case, dreadful as it is, is not desperate. For we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins. But let him above all things beware, lest his "heart be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin:" Lest he should sink lower and lower,

till he wholly fall away, till he become as salt that hath lost its savour: "For if we thus sin wilfully, after we have received the experimental knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins: But a certain, fearful looking for of fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

. II. 1. "But although we may not wholly separate ourselves from mankind, altho' it be granted, we ought to season them, with the religion which God has wrought in our hearts, yet may not this be done insensibly? May we not convey this into others in a secret, and almost imperceptible manner? So that scarce any one shall be able to observe, how or when it is done? Even as salt conveys its own savour, into that which is seasoned thereby, without any noise, and without being liable to any outward observation. And if so, although we do not go out of the world, yet we may lie hid in it. We may thus far keep our religion to ourselves, and not offend those whom we cannot help."

2. Of this plausible reasoning of flesh and blood, our Lord was well aware also. And he has given a full answer to it in those words which come now to be considered: in explaining which I shall endeavor to shew, as I proposed to do, in the second place, that so long as true religion abides in our hearts it is impossible to conceal it, as well as absolutely contrary to the design of its great author.

And, first, It is impossible for any that have it, to conceal the religion of Jesus Christ. This our Lord makes plain beyond all contradiction, by a two-fold comparison. "Ye are the light of the world. A city set upon a hill cannot be hid."

Ye christians are the light of the world, with regard both to your tempers and actions. Your holiness makes you as conspicuous, as the sun in the midst of heaven. As ye cannot go out of the world, so neither can ye stay in it, without appearing to all mankind. Ye may not flee from men, and while ye are among them, it is impossible to hide your lowliness and meekness, and those other dispositions whereby ye aspire to be perfect, as your father which is in heaven is perfect. Love cannot be hid any more than light; and least of all, when it shines forth in action; when ye exercise yourselves in the labor of love, in beneficence of every kind. As well may men think to hide a city, as to hide

a christian: yea, as well may they conceal a city set upon a hill, as a holy, zealous, active lover of God and man.

3. It is true, men who love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil, will take all possible pains to prove, that the light which is in you is darkness. They will say evil, all manner of evil, falsely, of the good which is in you: they will lay to your charge that which is farthest from your thoughts, which is the very reverse of all you are, and all you do. And your patient continuance in well-doing, your meek suffering all things for the Lord's sake, your calm, humble joy in the midst of persecution, your unwearied labor to overcome evil with good, will make you still more visible and conspicuous than ye were before.

4. So impossible it is to keep our religion from being seen, unless we cast it away: so vain is the thought, of hiding the light, unless by putting it out. Sure it is, that a secret, unobserved religion cannot be the religion of Jesus Christ. Whatever religion can be concealed, is not christianity. If a christian could be hid, he could not be compared to a city set upon a hill; to the light of the world, the sun shining from heaven, and seen by all the world below. Never therefore let it enter into the heart of him whom God hath renewed in the spirit of his mind, to hide that light, to keep his religion to himself: especially considering it is not only impossible, to conceal true christianity, but likewise absolutely contrary to the design of the great author of it.

5. This plainly appears from the following words: neither do men light a candle to put it under a bushel. As if he had said, as men do not light a candle, only to cover and conceal it, so neither does God enlighten any soul with his glorious knowledge and love, to have it covered or concealed, either by prudence, falsely so called, or shame, or voluntary humility: to have it hid either in a desert, or in the world; either by avoiding men, or in conversing with them. But they put it on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house. In like manner, it is the design of God, that every christian should be in an open point of view: that he may give light to all around, that he may visibly express the religion of Jesus Christ.

6. Thus hath God in all ages spoken to the world, not

only by precept, but by example also. He hath not left himself without witness in any nation, where the sound of the gospel hath gone forth, without a few who testified his truth, by their lives as well as their words. These have been as lights shining in a dark place. And from time to time they have been the means of enlightning some of preserving a remnant, a little seed, which was counted unto the Lord for a generation. They have led a few poor sheep out of the darkness of the world, and guided their feet into the way of peace.

7. One might imagine, that where both scripture and the reason of things speak so clearly and expressly, there could not be much advanced on the other side, at least, not with any appearance of truth. But they who imagine thus, know little of the depths of satan. After all that scripture and reason have said, so exceeding plausible are the pretences for a solitary religion, for a christian's going out of the world, or at least hiding himself in it, that we need all the wisdom of God to see through the snare, and all the power of God to escape it: so many and strong are the objections which have been brought against being social, open, active christians.

III. 1. To answer these was the third thing which I proposed. And first, it has been often objected, that religion does not lie in outward things, but in the heart, the inmost soul: that it is the union of the soul with God, the life of God in the soul of man: that outside religion is nothing worth; seeing God delighteth not in burnt-offerings, in outward services, but a pure and holy heart is the sacrifice he will not despise.

I answer, it is most true, that the root of religion lies in the heart, in the inmost soul: that this is the union of the soul with God, the life of God in the soul of man. But if this root be really in the heart, it cannot but put forth branches. And these are, the several instances of outward obedience, which partake of the same nature with the root; and consequently, are not only marks or signs, but substantial parts of religion.

It is also true, that bare outside religion, which has no root in the heart, is nothing worth; that God delighteth not in such outward services, no more than in Jewish burnt-offerings, and that a pure and holy heart is a sacrifice, with

which he is always well pleased. But he is also well pleased with all that outward service, which arises from the heart: with the sacrifice of our prayers, (whether public or private) of our praises and thanksgivings: with the sacrifice of our goods, humbly devoted to him, and employed wholly to his glory: and with that of our bodies, which he peculiarly claims; which the apostle beseeches us, by the mercies of God, to present unto him, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God.

2. A second objection, nearly related to this, is, that love is all in all: that it is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment, of every commandment of God: that all we do and all we suffer, if we have not charity or love, profiteth us nothing: and therefore the apostle directs us to follow after charity, and terms this, the more excellent way.

Answer, it is granted, that the love of God and man arising from faith unfeigned, is all in all, the fulfilling of the law, the end of every commandment of God. It is true, that without this, whatever we do, whatever we suffer profits us nothing. But it does not follow, that love is all in such a sense, as to supercede either faith or good works. It is the fulfilling of the law, not by releasing us from, but by constraining us to obey it. It is the end of the commandment, as every commandment leads to and centers in it. It is allowed, that whatever we do or suffer, without love, profits us nothing. But withal whatever we do or suffer in love, though it were only the suffering reproach for Christ, or the giving a cup of cold water in his name, it shall in no wise lose its reward.

3. "But does not the apostle direct us, to follow after charity?" And does he not term it a more excellent way? He does direct us to follow after charity. But not after that alone. His words are, "follow after charity; and desire spiritual gifts." Yea, follow after charity; and desire to spend and to be spent for your brethren. Follow after charity; and, as you have opportunity, do good to all men.

In the same verse also, wherein he terms this, the way of love, a more excellent way, he directs the Corinthians to desire other gifts besides it: Yea to desire them earnestly. Covet earnestly, saith he, the best gifts: and yet I



shew unto you a more excellent way. More excellent than what? Than the gifts of healing, of speaking with tongues, and of interpreting, mentioned in the preceding verse. But not more excellent than the way of obedience. Of this the apostle is not speaking. Neither is he speaking of outward religion at all. So that this text is quite wide of the present question.

But suppose the apostle had been speaking of outward as well as inward religion, and comparing them together: suppose in the comparison he had given the preference ever so much to the latter; suppose he had preferred (as he justly might) a loving heart, before all outward works whatever; Yet it would not follow, that we were to reject, either one or the other. No; God hath joined them together from the beginning of the world. And let not man put them asunder.

4. "But God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth. And is not this enough? Nay, ought we not to employ the whole strength of our mind herein? Does not attending to outward things, clog the soul, that it cannot soar aloft in holy contemplation? Does it not damp the vigor of our thoughts? Has it not a natural tendency to incumber and distract the mind?—Whereas St. Paul would have us to be without carefulness, and to wait upon the Lord without distraction."

I answer, God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth. Yea, and this is enough: we ought to employ the whole strength of our mind therein. But then I would ask, what is it to worship God, a spirit, in spirit and in truth? Why, it is to worship him with our spirit; to worship him in that manner, which none but spirits are capable of. It is, to believe in him, as a wise, just, holy being, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity: and yet merciful, gracious, and long suffering; forgiving iniquity and transgression of sin: casting all our sins behind his back, and accepting us in the beloved. It is to love him, to delight in him, to desire him, with all our heart, and mind, and soul and strength: to imitate him we love, by purifying ourselves, even as he is pure; and to obey him whom we love, and in whom we believe, both in thought, and word and work. Consequently, one branch of the worshipping God in spirit and in truth, is the

keeping his outward commandments. To glorify him therefore with our bodies as well as with our spirits, to go through outward work with hearts lifted up to him, to make our daily employment a sacrifice to God ; to buy and sell, to eat and drink to his glory : this is worshipping God in spirit and in truth, as much as the praying to him in a wilderness.

5. But if so, then contemplation is only one way of worshipping God in spirit and in truth. Therefore to give ourselves up entirely to this, would be to destroy many branches of spiritual worship, all equally acceptable to God, and equally profitable, not hurtful to the soul. For it is a great mistake to suppose, that an attention to those outward things whereto the providence of God hath called us, is any clog to a christian, or any hindrance at all to his always seeing him that is invisible. It does not at all damp the ardour of his thought, it does not incumber or distract his mind ; it gives him no uneasy or hurtful care, who does it all as unto the Lord : who hath learned, whatsoever he doth in word or deed, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus : having only one eye of the soul, which moves round on outward things, and one immovably fixt on God. Learn what this meaneth, ye poor recluses, that you may clearly discern your own littleness of faith. Yea, that you may no longer judge others by yourselves, go and learn what that meaneth :

Thou, O Lord, in tender love,  
Dost all my burdens bear ;  
Lift my heart to things above,  
And fix it ever there.

Calm on tumult's wheel I sit ;  
Midst busy multitudes alone,  
Sweetly waiting at thy feet,  
Till all thy will be done.

6. But the grand objection is still behind. " We appeal, say they, to experience. Our light did shine : we used outward things many years : and yet they profited nothing. We attended on all the ordinances : but we were no better for it ; nor indeed any one else : nay, we were the worse-

For we fancied ourselves christians for so doing, when we knew not what christianity meant,"

I allow the fact. I allow that you and ten thousand more have thus abused the ordinances of God: mistaking the means for the end: supposing that the doing these or some other outward works, either was the religion of Jesus Christ, or would be accepted in the place of it. But let the abuse be taken away and the use remain. Now use all outward things; but see them with a constant eye to the renewal of your soul in righteousness and true holiness.

7. But this is not all. They affirm, "experience likewise shews, that the trying to do good is but lost labor: what does it avail to feed or cloath men's bodies, if they are just dropping into everlasting fire? And what good can any man do their souls? If these are changed, God doth it himself. Besides, all men are either good, at least desirous so to be, or obstinately evil. Now the former have no need of us. Let them ask help of God, and it shall be given them. And the latter will receive no help from us. Nay, and our Lord forbids, to cast our pearls before swine."

I answer, 1. whether they will finally be lost or saved, you are expressly commanded, to feed the hungry and cloath the naked. If you can, and do not, whatever becomes of them, you shall go away into everlasting fire. 2. Though it is God only changes hearts, yet he generally doth it by man. It is our part to do all that in us lies, as diligently as if we could change them ourselves, and then to leave the event to him. 3. God, in answer to their prayers, builds up his children by each other in every good gift; nourishing and strengthening the whole body, by that which every joint supplieth. So that the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; no, nor even the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Lastly, how are you assured, that the persons before you are dogs or swine? Judge them not, until you have tried. How knowest thou, O man, but thou mayest gain thy brother? But thou mayest, under God, save his soul from death? When he spurns thy love, and blasphemes the good word, then it is time to give him up to God.

8. "We have tried. We have labored to reform sinners. And what did it avail? On many we could make

no impression at all : and if some were changed for a while, yet their goodness was but as the morning dew ; and they were soon as bad, nay worse than ever. So that we only hurt them - and ourselves too ; for our minds were hurried and discomposed : perhaps filled with anger instead of love. Therefore we had better have kept our religion to ourselves."

It is very possible this fact also may be true : that you have tried to do good, and have not succeeded ; yea, that those who seemed reformed, relapsed into sin, and their last state was worse than the first. And what marvel ? Is the servant above his master ? But how often did he strive to save sinners ; and they would not hear : or when they had followed him a while, they turned back as a dog to his vomit. But he did not therefore desist from striving to do good ; no more should you, whatever your success be. It is your part, to do as you are commanded. The event is in the hand of God. You are not accountable for this : leave it to him, who orders all things well. In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand ; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, Eccles. ix. 6.

"But the trial hurries and frets your own soul." Perhaps it did so for this very reason, because you thought you was accountable for the event, which no man is, nor indeed can be. Or perhaps, because you was off your guard ; you was not watchful over your own spirit. But this is no reason for disobeying God. Try again ; but try more warily than before. Do good (as you forgive) not seven times only ; but until seventy times seven. Only be wiser by experience : attempt it every time more cautiously than before. Be more humbled before God, more deeply convinced, that of yourself you can do nothing. Be more jealous over your own spirit : more gentle and watchful unto prayer. Thus cast your bread upon the waters, and you shall find it again after many days.

IV. 1. Notwithstanding all these plausible pretences for hiding it, let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven. This is the practical application which our Lord himself makes of the foregoing considerations.

Let your light so shine—Your lowliness of heart, your

gentleness and meekness of wisdom : your serious, weighty concern for the things of eternity, and sorrow for the sins and miseries of men : your earnest desire of universal holiness and real happiness in God : your tender good-will to all mankind, and fervent love to your supreme benefactor. Endeavor not to conceal this light wherewith God hath enlightened your soul : but let it shine before men, before all with whom you are, in the whole tenor of your conversation. Let it shine still more eminently in your actions, in your doing all possible good to all men : and in your suffering for righteousness sake, while you rejoice and are exceeding glad, knowing that great is your reward in heaven.

2. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works : so far let a christian be from ever designing, or desiring to conceal his religion. On the contrary, let it be your desire, not to conceal it ; not to put the light under a bushel. Let it be your care to place it on a candlestick, that it may give light unto all that are in the house. Only take heed, not to seek your own praise herein, not to desire any honour to yourselves. But let it be your sole aim, that all, who see your good works, may glorify your father which is in heaven.

3. Be this your one ultimate end in all things. With this view, be plain, open, undisguised. Let your love be without dissimulation : why should you hide fair, disinterested love ? Let there be no guile found in your mouth : let your words be the genuine picture of your heart. Let there be no darkness or reservedness in your conversation, no disguise in your behaviour. Leave this to those who have other designs in view ; designs which will not bear the light. Be ye artless and simple to all mankind : that all may see the grace of God which is in you. And although some will harden their hearts, yet others will take knowledge, that ye have been with Jesus, and by returning themselves to the great bishop of their souls, glorify your father which is in heaven.

4. With this one design, that men may glorify God in you, go on in his name, and in the power of his might. Be not ashamed, even to stand alone, so it be in the ways of God. Let the light which is in your heart, shine in all good works, both works of piety and works of mercy. And

in order to enlarge your ability of doing good, renounce all superfluities. Cut off all unnecessary expence, in food, in furniture, in apparel. Be a good steward of every gift of God, even of these his lowest gifts. Cut off all unnecessary expence of time, all needless or useless employments. And whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. In a word, be thou full of faith and love: do good: suffer evil. And herein be thou stedfast, unmoveable: yea, always abounding in the work of the Lord: for as much as thou knowest that thy labor is not in vain in the Lord.

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## SERMON V.

*Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount.*

### DISCOURSE V.

MATTHEW v. 17, 18, 19, 20.

*Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets ;  
I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

*For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot  
or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be  
fulfilled.*

*Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least command-  
ments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in  
the kingdom of heaven ; but whosoever shall do and teach  
them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heav-  
en.*

*For verily I say unto you, except your righteousness shall  
exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye  
shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

1. **A**MONG the multitude of reproaches which fell upon him who was despised and rejected of men, it could not fail to be one, that he was a teacher of novelties, an introducer of a new religion. This might be affirmed with the more colour, because many of the expressions he

had used, were not common among the Jews: either they did not use them at all, or not in the same sense, not in so full and strong a meaning. Add to this, that the worshipping God in spirit and in truth, must always appear a new religion, to those who have hitherto known nothing but outside worship, nothing but the form of godliness.

2. And it is not improbable, some might hope it was so: that he was abolishing the old religion, and bringing in another; one which they might flatter themselves, would be an easier way to heaven. But our Lord refutes in these words both the vain hopes of the one, and the groundless calumnies of the other.

I shall consider them in the same order as they lie, taking each verse for a distinct head of discourse.

I. 1. And first, think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfil.

The ritual or ceremonial law, delivered by Moses to the children of Israel, containing all the injunctions and ordinances which related to the old sacrifices and service of the temple, our Lord indeed did come to destroy, to dissolve and utterly abolish. To this bear all the apostles witness; not only Barnabas and Paul, who vehemently withstood those who taught, that christians ought to keep the law of Moses, not only St. Peter, who termed the insisting on this, on the observance of the ritual law, a tempting God, and putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers, saith he, nor we were able to bear; but all the apostles, elders and brethren, being assembled with one accord, declared, that to command them to keep this law, was to subvert their souls; and that it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to them, to lay no such burthen upon them. This hand-writing of ordinances our Lord did blot out, take away and nail to his cross.

2. But the moral law, contained in the ten commandments, and enforced by the prophets, he did not take away. It was not the design of his coming, to revoke any part of this. This is the law which never can be broken, which stands fast as the faithful witness in heaven. The moral stands on an entirely different foundation, from the ceremonial or ritual law; which was only designed for a temporary restraint upon a disobedient and stiff-necked people: whereas this was from the beginning of the world; being

written, not on tables of stone, but on the hearts of all the children of men, when they came out of the hands of the Creator. And however the letters once wrote by the finger of God, are now in a great measure defaced by sin, yet can they wholly be blotted out, while we have any consciousness of good and evil. Every part of the law must remain in force, upon all mankind, and in all ages; as not depending either on time or place, or any other circumstances liable to change; but on the nature of God, and the nature of man, and their unchangeable relation to each other.

3. I am come to destroy but to fulfil. Some have conceived our Lord to mean, I am come to fulfil this, by my entire and perfect obedience to it. And it cannot be doubted but he did, in this sense, fulfil every part of it. But this does not appear to be what he intends here, being foreign to the scope of his present discourse. Without question his meaning in this place is, (consistently with all that goes before and follows after) I am come to establish it in its fulness, in spite of all the glosses of men. I am come to place in a full and clear view, whatsoever was dark or obscure therein. I am come to declare the true and full import of every part of it; to shew the length and breadth, the entire extent of every commandment contained therein: and the height and depth, the inconceivable purity and spirituality of it in all its branches.

4. And this our Lord has abundantly performed in the preceding and subsequent parts of the discourse before us: in which he has not introduced a new religion into the world, but the same which was from the beginning: a religion, the substance of which is without question, "as old as the creation:" being coeval with man, and having proceeded from God, at the very time when man became a living soul: (the substance, I say, for some circumstances of it, now relate to man as a fallen creature.) A religion witnessed to both by the law, and by the prophets in all succeeding generations. Yet was it never so fully explained, nor so thoroughly understood, till the great author of it himself, condescended to give mankind this authentic comment on all the essential branches of it: at the same time declaring it should never be changed, but remain in force to the end of the world.

II. 1 For verily I say unto you (a solemn preface, which



denotes both the importance and certainty of what is spoken) till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.

One jot—It is literally not one Iota, not the most inconsiderable vowel, or one tittle, *mia keraia*, one corner, or point of a consonant. It is a proverbial expression, which signifies that no one commandment contained in the moral law, nor the least part of one, however inconsiderable it might seem, should ever be disannulled.

Shall in no wise pass from the law : *ou me par elthe apo tou nomou* : The double negative here used, strengthens the sense, so as to admit of no contradiction. And the word *parelthe*, it may be observed, is not barely future ; declaring what will be : but has likewise the force of an imperative ; ordering what shall be. It is a word of authority, expressing the sovereign will and power of him that spake : of him whose word is the law of heaven and earth, and stands fast for ever and ever.

One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass, till heaven and earth pass ; or as it is exprest immediately after, *eos an panta genetai* : till all (or rather all things) be fulfilled, till the consummation of all things. Here is therefore no room for that poor evasion (with which some have delighted themselves greatly) that “ no part of the law was to pass away, till all the law was fulfilled : but it has been fulfilled by Christ ; and therefore now must pass, for the gospel to be established. Not so ; the word all does not mean all the law, but all things in the universe : as neither has the term fulfilled, any reference to the law, but to all things in heaven and earth.

3. From all this we may learn, that there is no contrariety at all, between the law and the gospel ; that there is no need for the law to pass away, in order to the establishing of the gospel. Indeed neither of them supercedes the other, but they agree perfectly well together. Yea, the very same words, considered in different respects, are parts both of the law and of the gospel : if they are considered as commandments, they are parts of the law ; if as promises, of the gospel. Thus, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, when considered as a commandment, is a branch of the law : when regarded as a promise, is an essential part of the gospel : the gospel being no other than the

commands of the law, proposed by the way of promises. Accordingly poverty of spirit, purity of heart, and whatever else is enjoined in the holy law of God, are no other, when viewed in a gospel light, than so many great and precious promises.

3. There is therefore the closest connexion that can be conceived, between the law and the gospel. On the one hand, the law continually makes way for, and points us to the gospel: on the other, the gospel continually leads us to a more exact fulfilling of the law. The law, for instance, requires us to love God, to love our neighbor, to be meek, humble or holy: we feel that we are not sufficient for these things: yea, that with man this is impossible. But we see a promise of God, to give us that love, and to make us humble, meek, and holy. We lay hold of this gospel, of these glad tidings: it is done unto us according to our faith: And the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

We may yet farther observe, that every command in holy writ, is only a covered promise. For by that solemn declaration, this is the covenant I will make after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws in your minds, and write them in your hearts, God hath engaged to give whatsoever he commands. Does he command us then to pray without ceasing? To rejoice evermore? To be holy as he is holy? It is enough. He will work in us this very thing. It shall be unto us according to his word.

4. But if these things are so, we cannot be at a loss, what to think of those who in all ages of the church, have undertaken to change or supersede some commands of God, as they professed, by the peculiar direction of his spirit.—Christ has here given us an infallible rule, whereby to judge of all such pretensions. Christianity, as it includes the whole moral law of God, both by way of injunction and of promise, if we will hear him, is designed of God, to be the last of all his dispensations. There is no other to come after this. This is to endure till the consummation of all things. Of consequence all such new revelations, are of satan and not of God; and all pretences to another more perfect dispensation, fall to the ground of course. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but this word shall not pass away.

III. 1. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven : but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Who, what are they, that make “ the preaching of the law,” a character of reproach ? Do they not see on whom the reproach must fall ? On whose head it must light at last ? Whosoever on this ground despiseth us, despiseth him that sent us. For did ever any man preach the law like him ? Even when he came, not to condemn but to save the world : when he came purposely to bring life and immortality to light through the gospel ? Can any “ preach the law ” more expressly, more rigorously, than Christ does in these words ? And who is he that shall amend them ? Who is he that shall instruct the Son of God, how to preach ? Who will teach him a better way of delivering the message which he hath received of the father ?

Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, or one of the least of these commandments—These commandments, we may observe, is a term used by our Lord as equivalent with the law : or the law and the prophets, which is the same thing, seeing the prophets added nothing to the law ; but only declared, explained, or enforced it, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments—especially if it be done wilfully or presumptuously : one : for he that keepeth the whole law, and thus offends in one point, is guilty of all : the wrath of God abideth on him, as surely as if he had broken every one. So that no allowance is made for one darling lust ; no reserve for one idol : no excuse for refraining from all besides, and only giving way to one bosom sin. What God demands is, an entire obedience : we are to have an eye to all his commandments : otherwise we lose all the labor we take in keeping some, and our poor souls for ever and ever.

One of these least, or one of the least of these commandments.—Here is another excuse cut off, whereby many, who cannot deceive God, miserably deceive their own souls. “ This sin, saith the sinner, is it not a little one ? Will not the Lord spare me in this thing ? Surely he will not be extreme to mark this, since I do not offend in the greater

matters of the law." Vain hope! Speaking after the manner of men, we may term these great and those little commandments. But in reality, they are not so. If we use propriety of speech, there is no such thing as a little sin: every sin being a transgression of the holy and perfect law, and an affront of the great majesty of heaven.

3. And shall teach men so—In some sense it may be said, that whosoever openly breaks any commandment, teaches others to do the same: for example speaks, and many times louder than precept. In this sense it is apparent, every open drunkard, is a teacher of drunkenness: every sabbath-breaker is constantly teaching his neighbor, to profane the day of the Lord. But this is not all: an habitual breaker of the law, is seldom content to stop here.—He generally teaches other men to do so too, by word as well as example: especially when he hardens his neck, and hateth to be reprov'd. Such a sinner soon commences an advocate for sin: he defends what he is resolved not to forsake. He excuses the sin which he will not leave, and thus directly teaches every sin which he commits.

He shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: that is, shall have no part therein. He is a stranger to the kingdom of heaven which is on earth; he hath no portion in that inheritance; no share of that righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Nor by consequence can he have any part, in the glory which shall be revealed.

4. But if those who even thus break, and teach others to break, one of the least of these commandments, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven, shall have no part in the kingdom of Christ and of God; if even these shall be cast into outer darkness, where is wailing and gnashing of teeth: then where will they appear, whom our Lord chiefly and primarily intends in those words? They who, bearing the character of teachers sent from God, do nevertheless themselves break his commandments, yea and openly teach others so to do: being corrupt both in life and doctrine.

5. These are of several sorts. Of the first sort are they, who live in some willful, habitual sin. Now if an ordinary sinner teaches by his example, how much more a sinful minister? Even if he does not attempt to defend, excuse, or

extenuate his sin. If he does, he is a murderer indeed, yea, the murderer-general of his congregation. He peoples the regions of death. He is the choicest instrument of the prince of darkness. When he goes hence, hell from beneath is moved to meet him at his coming. Nor can he sink into the bottomless pit, without dragging a multitude after him.

6. Next to these are the good-natured, good sort of men: who live an easy, harmless life, neither troubling themselves with outward sin, nor with inward holiness: men who are remarkable neither one way nor the other; neither for religion nor irreligion: who are very regular both in public and private; but do not pretend to be any stricter than their neighbors. A minister of this kind breaks, not one, or a few only of the least commandments of God; but all the great and weighty branches of his law, which relate to the power of godliness: and all that require us to pass the time of our sojourning in fear, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling; to have our loins always girt, and our lights burning; to strive or agonize to enter in at the strait gate. And he teaches men so, by the whole form of his life, and the general tenor of his preaching: which uniformly tends to sooth those in their pleasing dreams, who imagine themselves christians and are not; to persuade all who attend upon his ministry, to sleep on and take their rest. No marvel, therefore, if both he and they that follow him, wake together in everlasting burnings.

7. But above all these, in the highest rank of the enemies of the gospel of Christ, are they who openly and explicitly judge the law itself, and speak evil of the law: who teach men to break (*hurai* to dissolve, to loose, to untie the obligation) not one only, whether of the least, or of the greatest, but all the commandments at a stroke: who teach, without any cover, in so many words, "what did our Lord do with the law? He abolished it." "There is but one duty, which is that of believing. All commandments are unfit for our times. For any demand of the law no man is obliged now to go one step, to give away one farthing, to eat or omit one morsel." This is indeed carrying matters with a high hand. This is withstanding our Lord to the face, and telling him, that he understood not how to deliver the message on which he was sent. O Lord, lay not this sin to

their charge ! Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do !

8. The most surprising of all the circumstances, that attend this strong delusion, is that they who are given up to it really believe, that they honor Christ, by overthrowing his law, and that they are magnifying his office, while they are destroying his doctrine ! Yea, they honor him just as Judas did, when he said, " Hail, Master, and kissed him." And he may as justly say, to every one of them, betrayest thou the son of man with a kiss ? It is no other than betraying him with a kiss, to talk of his blood and take away his crown : to set light by any part of his law, under pretence of advancing his gospel. Nor indeed can any one escape this charge, who preaches faith in any such manner, as either directly or indirectly tends, to set aside any branch of obedience : who preaches Christ so as to disannul, or weaken in any wise the least of the commandments of God.

9. It is impossible indeed to have too high an esteem for the faith of God's elect. And we must all declare, by grace ye are saved through faith : not of works, lest any man should boast. We must cry aloud to every penitent sinner, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. But at the same time we must take care to let all men know, we esteem no faith but that which worketh by love : and that we are not saved by faith, unless so far as we are delivered from the power as well as the guilt of sin. And when we say, believe and thou shalt be saved ; we do not mean, " believe and thou shalt step from sin to heaven ; without any holiness coming between : faith supplying the place of holiness : " but, Believe and thou shalt be holy : believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt have peace and power together. Thou shalt have power from him in whom thou believest, to trample sin under thy feet ; power to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and to serve him with all thy strength. Thou shalt have power, by patient continuance in well-doing, to seek for glory and honor and immortality. Thou shalt both do and teach all the commandments of God, from the least even to the greatest. Thou shalt teach them by thy life as well as thy words, and so be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

IV. 1. Whatever other way we teach to the kingdom of

heaven, to glory, honor and immortality, be it called the way of faith, or by any other name, it is in truth, the way to destruction. It will not bring a man peace at the last. For thus saith the Lord, verily I say unto you, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The Scribes, mentioned so often in the New Testament as some of the most constant and vehement opposers of our Lord, were not secretaries, or men employed in writing only, as that term might incline us to believe. Neither were they "lawyers," in our common sense of the word (altho' the word *nomikoi* is so rendered in our translation.) Their employment had no affinity at all, to that of a lawyer among us. They were conversant with the laws of God, and not with the laws of man. These were their study: it was their proper and peculiar business, to read and expound the law and the prophets; particularly in the synagogues.— They were the ordinary, stated preachers among the Jews. So that if the sense of the original word was attended to, we might render it the divines. For these were the men who made divinity their profession; and they were generally (as their name literally imports) men of letters; men of the greatest account for learning that were then in the Jewish nation.

2. The Pharisees were a very ancient sect, or body of men, among the Jews: originally so called from the Hebrew word which signifies, to separate or divide. Not that they made any formal separation from, or division in the national church. They were only distinguished from others, by greater strictness of life, by more exactness of conversation. For they were zealous of the law in the minutest points; paying tithes of mint, anise, and cummin.— And hence they were had in honor of all the people, and generally esteemed the holiest of men.

Many of the Scribes were of the sect of the Pharisees. Thus St. Paul himself, who was educated for a Scribe, first at the university of Tarsus, and after that in Jerusalem, at the feet of Gamaliel (one of the most learned Scribes or doctors of the law that were then in the nation) declares of himself before the council, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: and before king Agrippa, after the straitest sect of

our religion I lived a Pharisee. And the whole body of the Scribes generally esteemed and acted in consort with the Pharisees. Hence we find our saviour so frequently coupling them together, as coming in many respects under the same consideration. In this place they seem to be mentioned together, as the most eminent professors of religion : the former of whom were accounted the wisest, the latter the holiest of men

3. What the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees really was, it is not difficult to determine. Our Lord has preserved an authentic account, which one of them gave of himself. And he is clear and full in describing his own righteousness; and cannot be supposed to have omitted any part of it. He went up indeed into the temple to pray; but was so intent upon his own virtues, that he forgot the design upon which he came. For it is remarkable, he does not properly pray at all. He only tells God, how wise and good he was. God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are; extortioners, unjust, adulterers; or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess. His righteousness therefore consisted of three parts; first, saith he, I am not as other men are. I am not an extortioner, not unjust, not an adulterer; not even as this publican. Secondly, I fast twice in the week; thirdly, give tithes of all that I possess.

I am not as other men are. This is not a small point. It is not every man that can say this. It is, as if he had said, I do not suffer myself to be carried away by that great torrent, custom. I live not by custom, but by reason; not by the examples of men, but by the word of God. I am not an extortioner, not unjust, not an adulterer: however common these sins are, even among those who are called the people of God: (extortion in particular, a kind of legal injustice; not punishable by any human law, the making gain of another's ignorance or necessity, having filled every corner of the land.) Nor even as this publican; not guilty of any open or presumptuous sin; not an outward sinner; but a fair, honest man, of blameless life and conversation.

4. I fast twice in the week. There is more implied in this, than we may at first be sensible of. All the stricter Pharisees observed the weekly fasts; namely, every Monday



and Thursday. On the former day, they fasted in memory of Moses receiving on that day (as their tradition taught) the two tables of stone written by the finger of God: on the latter, in memory of his casting them out of his hand, when he saw the people dancing round the golden calf. On these days, they took no sustenance at all till three in the afternoon; the hour at which they began to offer up the evening sacrifice in the temple. Till that hour it was their custom to remain in the temple, in some of the corners, apartments or courts thereof; that they might be ready to assist at all the sacrifices, and to join in all the public prayers. The time between, they were accustomed to employ, partly in private addresses to God, partly in searching the scriptures, in reading the law and the prophets, and in meditating thereon. Thus much is implied in, I fast twice in the week, the second branch of the righteousness of a Pharisee.

5. I give tithes of all that I possess. This the Pharisees did with the utmost exactness. They would not except the most inconsiderable thing, no, not mint, anise and cummin. They would not keep back the least part of what they believed properly to belong to God; but gave a full tenth of their whole substance yearly, and of all their increase, whatsoever it was.

Yea, the stricter Pharisees (as has been often observed by those who are versed in the ancient Jewish writings) not content with giving one tenth of their substance to God, in his priests and levites, gave another tenth to God in the poor, and that continually. They gave the same proportion of all they had in alms, as they were accustomed to give in tithes. And this likewise they adjusted with the utmost exactness, that they might not keep back any part, but might fully render unto God the things which were God's, as they accounted this to be. So that upon the whole, they gave away, from year to year, an entire fifth of all that they possessed.

6. This was the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees: a righteousness which, in many respects, went far beyond the conception which many have been accustomed to entertain concerning it. But perhaps it will be said, it was all false and feigned; for they were all a company of hypocrites. Some of them doubtless were, men who had

no religion at all ; no fear of God, or desire to please him : who had no concern for the honor that cometh of God, but only for the praise of men. And these are they whom our Lord so severely condemns, so sharply reproveth on many occasions. But we must not suppose, because many Pharisees were hypocrites, therefore all were so. Nor indeed is hypocrisy by any means essential to the character of a Pharisee. This is not the distinguishing mark of their sect. It is rather this (according to our Lord's account) they trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. This is their genuine badge. But the Pharisee of this kind cannot be a hypocrite. He must be, in the common sense, sincere : otherwise he could not trust in himself that he is righteous. The man who was here commending himself to God, unquestionably thought himself righteous. Consequently, he was no hypocrite : he was not conscious to himself of any insincerity. He now spoke to God just what he thought, namely, that he was abundantly better than other men.

But the example of St. Paul, were there no other, is sufficient to put this out of all question. He could not only say, when he was a christian, herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward men : But even concerning the time when he was a Pharisee : men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. He was therefore sincere when he was a Pharisee, as well as when he was a christian. He was no more an hypocrite when he persecuted the church, than when he preached the faith which he once persecuted. Let this then be added to the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, a sincere belief that they are righteous, and in all things doing God service.

7. And yet, except your righteousness, saith our Lord, shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. A solemn and weighty declaration ! and which it behoves all who are called by the name of Christ, seriously and deeply to consider. But before we enquire, how our righteousness may exceed theirs, let us examine, whether at present we come up to it ?

First, a Pharisee was not as other men are. In externals he was singularly good. Are we so ? Do we dare to be

singular at all? Do we not rather swim with the stream? Do we not many times dispense with religion and reason together, because we would not look particular? Are we not often more afraid of being out of the fashion, than being out of the way of salvation? Have we courage to stem the tide? To run counter to the world? To obey God rather than man? Otherwise the Pharisee leaves us behind at the very first step. It is well if we overtake him any more.

But to come closer. Can we use his first plea with God, which is in substance, "I do no harm. I live in no outward sin; I do nothing, for which my own heart condemns me." Do you not? Are you sure of that? Do you live in no practice for which your own heart condemns you? If you art not an adulterer, if you are not unchaste, either in word or deed, are you not unjust? The grand measure of justice, as well as of mercy, is, do unto others as thou would'st they should do unto thee. Do you walk by this rule? Do you never do unto any what you would not they should do unto you? Nay, are you not grossly unjust? Are you not an extortioner? Do you not make a gain of any one's ignorance or necessity? Neither in buying nor selling? Suppose you were engaged in trade, do you demand, do you receive no more than the real value of what you sell? Do you demand, do you receive no more of the ignorant than of the knowing; of a little child than of an experienced trader? If you do, why does not your heart condemn you? You are a barefaced extortioner. Do you demand no more than the usual price of goods, of any who is in pressing want? Who must have, and that without delay, the things which you can only furnish him with? If you do, this also is flat extortion. Indeed you do not come up to the righteousness of a Pharisee.

8. A Pharisee, secondly, (to express his sense in our common way) used all the means of grace. As he fasted often and much, twice in every week, so he attended all the sacrifices. He was constant in public and private prayer, and in reading and hearing the scriptures. Do you go as far as this? Do you fast much and often? Twice in the week? I fear not. Once, at least; "on all Fridays in the year?" (So our church clearly and peremptorily enjoins all her members to do: to observe all these, as well as the vigils

and the forty days of Lent, as "days of fasting or abstinence.") Do you fast twice in the year? I am afraid, some among us cannot plead even this! Do you neglect no opportunity of attending and partaking of the christian sacrifice? How many are they, who call themselves christians, and yet are utterly regardless of it? Yet do not eat of that bread, or drink of that cup, for months, perhaps years together? Do you every day, either hear the scriptures or read them and meditate thereon? Do you join in prayer with the great congregation? Daily, if you have opportunity? If not whenever you can, particularly on that day, which you remember to keep it holy? Do you strive to make opportunities? Are you glad when they say unto you, we will go into the house of the Lord? Are you zealous of, and diligent in private prayer? Do you suffer no day to pass without it? Rather, are not some of you so far from spending therein (with the Pharisee) several hours in one day, that you think one hour full enough, if not too much? Do you spend an hour in a day, or in a week, in praying to your father which is in secret? Yea, an hour in a month? Have you spent one hour together in private prayer ever since you was born? Ah, poor christian! Shall not the Pharisee rise up in judgement against thee and condemn thee? His righteousness is as far above thine, as the heaven is above the earth.

9. The Pharisee, thirdly, paid tithes and gave alms of all that he possessed. And in how an p'le a manner? So that he was (as we phrase it) "a man that did much good." Do we come up to him here? Which of us is so abundant as he was in good works? Which of us gives a fifth of all his substance to God? Both of the principal, and of the increase? Who of us out of (suppose) an hundred pounds a year, gives twenty to God and the poor: out of fifty, ten; and so in a larger or a smaller proportion? When shall our righteousness, in using all the means of grace, in attending all the ordinances of God, in avoiding evil and doing good, equal at least the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees?

10. Although, if it only equalled theirs, what would that profit? For verily I say unto you, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

But how can it exceed theirs? Wherein does the righteousness of a christian exceed that of a Scribe or Pharisee?

Christian righteousness exceeds theirs, first, in the extent of it. Most of the Pharisees, though they were rigorously exact in many things, yet were emboldened by the traditions of the elders to dispense with others of equal importance. Thus they were extremely punctual in keeping the fourth commandment; they would not even rub an ear of corn on the sabbath-day: but not at all in keeping the third, making little account of light, or even false swearing. So that their righteousness was partial: whereas the righteousness of a real christian is universal. He does not observe one, or some parts of the law of God, and neglect the rest: but keeps all his commandments, loves them all, values them above gold or precious stones.

11. It may be, indeed, that some of the Scribes and Pharisees, endeavored to keep all the commandments, and consequently were, as touching the righteousness of the law, that is, according to the letter of it, blameless. But still the righteousness of a christian exceeds all this righteousness of a Scribe or Pharisee, by fulfilling the spirit as well as the letter of the law, by inward as well as outward obedience. In this, in the spirituality of it, it admits of no comparison. This is the point which our Lord has so largely proved, in the whole tenor of his discourse. Their righteousness was external only; Christian righteousness is in the inner man. The Pharisee cleansed the outside of the cup and the platter; the christian is clean within. The Pharisee labored to present God with a good life; the christian with a holy heart. The one shook off the leaves, perhaps the fruits of sin; the other lays the axe to the root: as not being content with the outward form of godliness, how exact soever it be, unless the life, the spirit, the power of God unto salvation, be felt in the inmost soul.

Thus, to do no harm, to do good, to attend the ordinances of God (the righteousness of a Pharisee) are all external: Whereas, on the contrary, poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, hunger and thirst after righteousness, the love of our neighbor, and purity of heart (the righteousness of a christian) are all internal. And even peace-making (or doing good) and suffering for righteousness sake, stand en-

titled to the blessings annexed to them, only as they imply these inward dispositions, as they spring from, exercise and confirm them. So that whereas the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was external only, it may be said, in some sense, that the righteousness of a christian is internal only : all his actions and sufferings being as nothing in themselves, being estimated before God only by the tempers from which they spring.

12. Whosoever therefore thou art, who bearest the holy and venerable name of a christian, see, first, that thy righteousness fall not short of the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. Be not thou as other men are. Dare to stand alone, to be

“ Against example, singularly good ! ”

If thou follow a multitude at all, it must be, to do evil. Let not custom or fashion be thy guide ; but reason and religion. The practice of others is nothing to thee. Every man must give an account of himself to God. Indeed, if thou canst save the soul of another, do : but at least, save one, thy own. Walk not in the path of death, because it is broad, and many walk therein. Nay, by this very token thou mayest know it. Is the way wherein thou now walkest a broad, well-frequented, fashionable way ? Then it infallibly leads to destruction. O be not thou “ damned for company : ” cease from evil ; fly from sin as from the face of a serpent. At least, do no harm. He that committeth sin is of the devil. Be not thou found in that number.— Touching outward sins, surely the grace of God is even now sufficient for thee. Herein, at least, exercise thyself to have a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward man.

Secondly, let not thy righteousness fall short of theirs, with regard to the ordinances of God. If thy labor or bodily strength will not allow of thy fasting twice in the week, however deal faithfully with thy own soul, and fast as often as thy strength will permit. Omit no public or private opportunity, of pouring out thy soul in prayer. Neglect no occasion of eating that bread and drinking of that cup, which is in the communion of the body and blood of Christ. Be diligent in searching the scriptures ; read as thou mayest, and meditate therein day and night. Rejoice to embrace every opportunity, of hearing the word of reconciliation de-

clared by the ambassadors of Christ, the stewards of the mysteries of God. In using all the means of grace, in a constant and careful attendance on every ordinance of God, live up to (at least, till thou canst go beyond) the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Thirdly, fall not short of the Pharisee in doing good.— Give alms of all thou dost possess. Is any hungry? Feed him. Is he a-thirst? Give him drink. Naked? Cover him with a garment. If thou hast this world's good, do not limit thy beneficence to a scanty proportion, Be merciful to the uttermost of thy power. Why not, even as this Pharisee? Now make thyself friends, while the time is, of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when thou failest, when this earthly tabernacle is dissolved, they may receive thee into everlasting habitations.

13. But rest not here. Let thy righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. Be not thou content to keep the whole law, and offend in one point.— Hold thou fast all his commandments, and all false ways do thou utterly abhor. Do all things whatsoever he hath commanded, and that with all thy might. Thou canst do all things through Christ strengthening thee, though without him thou canst do nothing.

Above all, let thy righteousness exceed theirs in the purity and spirituality of it. What is the exactest form of religion to thee? The most perfect outside righteousness? Go thou higher and deeper than all this. Let thy religion be the religion of the heart. Be thou poor in spirit; little, and base and mean, and vile in thy own eyes; amazed and humbled to the dust at the love of God which is in Christ Jesus thy Lord. Be serious: let the whole stream of thy thoughts, words, and works be such as flows from the deepest conviction, that thou standest on the edge of the great gulph, thou and all the children of men, just ready to drop in, either into everlasting glory, or everlasting burnings.— Be meek: let thy soul be filled with mildness, gentleness, patience, long suffering toward all men: at the same time that all which is in thee is a-thirst for God, the living God: longing to awake up after his likeness, and to be satisfied with it. Be thou a lover of God and of all mankind. In this spirit, do not suffer all things. Thus exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and thou shalt be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

## SERMON VI.

*Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount.*

## DISCOURSE VI.

MATTHEW vi. 1—15.

*Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them : otherwise ye have no reward of your father which is in heaven.*

*Therefore, when thou dost thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have praise of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.*

*But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth : that thine alms may be in secret, and thy father which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are ; for they love to pray, standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.*

*But thou when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy father which is in secret ; and thy father which seeth in secret, he shall reward thee openly.*

*But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the Heathen do ; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*

*Be not ye therefore like unto them : for your father knoweth what things ye have need of before you ask him.*

*After this manner, therefore, pray ye : Our father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. — Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*



*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you.*

*If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses.*

1. **I**N the preceding chapter our Lord has described inward religion, in its various branches. He has laid before us those dispositions of soul, which constitute real christianity: the inward tempers contained in that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: the affections which, when flowing from their proper fountain, from a living faith in God through Christ Jesus, are intrinsically and essentially good and acceptable to God. He proceeds to shew in this chapter, how all our actions likewise, even those that are indifferent in their own nature, may be made holy and good and acceptable to God, by a pure and holy intention. Whatever is done without this, he largely declares, is of no value before God. Whereas, whatever outward works are thus consecrated to God, they are, in his sight, of great price.

2. The necessity of this purity of intention, he shews first, with regard to those, which are usually accounted religious actions, and indeed are such, when performed with a right intention. Some of these are commonly termed works of piety; the rest, works of charity or mercy. Of the latter sort, he particularly names alms-giving; of the former, prayer and fasting. But the directions given for these are equally to be applied to every work, whether of charity or mercy.

I. 1. And first, with regard to works of mercy. Take heed, saith he, that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them. Otherwise ye have no reward for your father which is in heaven. That ye do not your alms. Although this only is named, yet is every work of charity included, every thing which we give, or speak or do, whereby our neighbor may be profited, whereby another man may receive any advantage, either in his body or soul. The feeding the hungry, the cloathing the naked, and entertaining or assisting the stranger, the visiting those that are sick or in prison, the comforting the afflicted; the instructing the ignorant, the reproving the wicked, the exhorting and encouraging the well-doer; and if there be any

other work of mercy, it is equally included in this direction.

2. Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them. The thing which is here forbidden is not barely the doing good in the sight of men: this circumstance alone, that others see what we do, makes the action neither worse nor better: but the doing it before men, to be seen of them; with this view, from this intention only. I say, from this intention only: for this may, in some cases, be a part of our intention; we may design that some of our actions should be seen, and yet they may be acceptable to God. We may intend, that our light should shine before men, when our conscience bears us witness, in the Holy Ghost, that our ultimate end in designing they should see our good works, is, that they may glorify our father which is in heaven. But take heed that ye do not the least thing with a view to your own glory. Take heed that ye regard to the praise of men, have no place at all in your works of mercy. If ye seek your own glory, if you have any design to gain the honor that cometh of men, whatever is done with this view is nothing worth: it is not done unto the Lord: he accepteth it not; ye have no reward for this of your father which is in heaven.

3. Therefore, when thou dost thy alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have praise of men. The word synagogue does not here mean a place of worship, but any place of public resort, such as the market-place or exchange. It was a common thing among the Jews, who were men of large fortunes, particularly among the Pharisees, to cause a trumpet to be sounded before them in the most public parts of the city, when they were about to give any considerable alms. The pretended reason for this was, to call all the poor together to receive it; but the real design, that they might have praise of men. But be not thou like unto them. Do not thou cause a trumpet to be sounded before thee. Use no ostentation in doing good. Aim at the honor which cometh of God only. They who seek the praise of men, have their reward. They shall have no praise of God.

4. But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth. This is a proverbial expression,

the meaning of which is, do it in as secret a manner as is possible: as secret as is consistent with the doing it at all; (for it must not be left undone: omit no opportunity of doing good, whether secretly or openly,) and with the doing it in the most effectual manner. For here is also an exception to be made. When you are fully persuaded in your own mind, that by your not concealing the good which is done, either you will yourself be enabled, or others excited to do the more good, then you may not conceal it: then let your light appear, and shine unto all that are in the house. But unless where the glory of God and the good of mankind oblige you to the contrary, act in as private and unobserved a manner as the nature of the thing will admit: that thy alms may be in secret, and thy father which seeth in secret, he shall reward thee openly. Perhaps in the present world; many instances of this stand recorded in all ages; but infallibly in the world to come, before the general assembly of men and angels.

II. 1. From works of charity or mercy, our Lord proceeds to those which are termed the works of piety. And when thou prayest, saith he, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are. Hypocrisy then, or insincerity, is the first thing we are to guard against in prayer. Beware not to speak what thou dost not mean. Prayer is the lifting up of the heart to God: All words of prayer without this are mere hypocrisy. Whenever therefore thou attemptest to pray, see that it be thy one design, to commune with God, to lift up thy heart to him, to pour out thy soul before him. Not as the hypocrites, who love, or are wont, to pray standing in the synagogues, the exchange or market-places, and in the corners of the streets, wherever the most people are, that they may be seen of men; this was the sole design, the motive and end, of the prayers which they there repeated. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. They are to expect none from your father which is in heaven.

2. But it is not only, the having an eye to the praise of men, which cuts us off from any reward in heaven; which leaves us no room to expect the blessing of God upon our works whether of piety or mercy. Purity of intention is

equally destroyed by a view to any temporal reward whatever. If we repeat our prayers, if we attend the public worship of God, if we relieve the poor, with a view to gain or interest, it is not a whit more acceptable to God, than if it were done with a view to praise. Any temporal view, any motive whatever on this side eternity, any design but that of promoting the glory of God, and the happiness of men, for God's sake, makes every action, however fair it may appear to men, an abomination unto the Lord.

3. But when thou prayest enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy father which is in secret. There is a time when thou art openly to glorify God, to pray and praise him in the great congregation. But when thou desirest more largely and more particularly to make thy requests known unto God, whether it be in the evening or in the morning, or at noon-day, enter into thy closet and shut the door. Use all the privacy thou canst. (Only leave it not undone, whether thou hast any closet, any privacy or no. Pray to God if it be possible, when none seeth but he: but if otherwise, pray to God.) Thus pray to thy father which is in secret; pour out all thy heart before him. And thy father which is in secret, he shall reward thee openly.

4. But when ye pray, even in secret, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do. Do not use abundance of words without any meaning. Say not the same thing over and over again: think not the fruit of your prayers depends on the length of them, like the heathens; for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking.

The thing here reprov'd, is not simply the length, any more than the shortness of our prayers; but first, length without meaning; the speaking much, and meaning little or nothing: the using (not all repetitions, for our Lord himself prayed thrice, repeating the same words; but) vain repetitions, as the heathens did, reciting the names of their Gods over and over: as they do among christians, (vulgarly so called) and not among the papists only, who say over and over the same string of prayers, without ever feeling what they speak: secondly, the thinking to be heard for our much speaking, the fancying God measures prayers by their length, and is best pleas'd with those which contain the most words, which sound the longest in his ears.

These are such instances of superstition and folly, as all who are named by the name of Christ, should leave to the heathens, to them on whom the glorious light of the gospel hath never shined.

5. Be not ye therefore like unto them. Ye who have tasted of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, are thoroughly convinced, your father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him. So that the end of your praying, is not to inform God, as though he knew not your wants already; but rather to inform yourselves, to fix the sense of those wants more deeply in your hearts, and the sense of your continual dependance on him, who only is able to supply all your wants. It is not so much to move God, who is always more ready to give you than you to ask, as to move yourselves, that you may be willing and ready to receive the good things he has prepared for you.

III. 1. After having taught the true nature and ends of prayer, our Lord subjoins an example of it: even that divine form of prayer, which seems in this place to be proposed by way of pattern chiefly, as the model and standard of all our prayers; after this manner, therefore, pray ye. Whereas elsewhere he enjoins the use of these very words, he said unto them, when ye pray, say—

2. We may observe in general concerning this divine prayer. First, that it contains all we can reasonably or innocently pray for. There is nothing which we have need to ask of God, nothing which we can ask without offending him, which is not included either directly or indirectly in this comprehensive form: secondly, that it contains all we can reasonably or innocently desire; whatever is for the glory of God, whatever is needful or profitable, not only for ourselves, but for every creature in heaven and earth. And indeed our prayers are the proper test of our desires; nothing being fit to have a place in our desires, which is not fit to have a place in our prayers: what we may not pray for, neither should we desire: thirdly, that it contains all our duty to God and man: whatsoever things are pure and holy, whatsoever God requires of the children of men, whatsoever is acceptable in his sight, whatsoever it is whereby we may profit our neighbor, being exprest or implied therein.

3. It consists of three parts, the preface, the petitions,

and the doxology or conclusion. The preface, our father which art in heaven, lays a general foundation for prayer; comprising what we must first know of God, before we can pray in confidence of being heard. It likewise points out to us all those tempers, with which we are to approach to God, which are most essentially requisite, if we desire either our prayers or our lives should find acceptance with him.

4. "Our father." If he is a father, then he is good, then he is loving to his children. And here is the first and great reason for prayer. God is willing to bless, let us ask for a blessing. "Our father,"—Our creator: the author of our being; he who raised us from the dust of the earth, who breathed into us the breath of life, and we became living souls. But if he made us, let us ask and he will not withhold any good thing from the work of his own hands. "Our father"—Our preserver; who day by day sustains the life he has given; of whose continuing love we now and every moment receive life, and breath, and all things. So much the more boldly let us come to him, and we shall find mercy, and grace to help in time of need. Above all, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of all that believe in him: who justifies us freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus: who hath blotted out all our sins, and healed all our infirmities; who hath received us for his own children, by adoption and grace, and because we are sons, hath sent for the spirit of his son into our hearts, crying, Abba, father: who hath begotten us again of incorruptible seed, and created us anew in Christ Jesus. Therefore we know that he heareth us always: therefore we pray to him without ceasing. We pray, because we love. And we love him, because he first loved us.

5. "Our father"—Not mine only who now cry unto him; but ours, in the most extensive sense. The God and father of the spirits of all flesh: the father of angels and men: (so the very heathens acknowledge him to be.) The father of the universe, of all the families both in heaven and earth. Therefore with him there is no respect of persons. He loveth all that he hath made. He is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works. And the Lord's delight is in them that fear him, and put their trust in his mercy; in them that trust in him through the son of his

love, knowing they are accepted in the beloved. But if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. Yea, all mankind : seeing God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, even to die the death, that they might not perish, but have everlasting life.

6. "Which art in heaven:"—high and lifted up; God over all, blessed for ever. Who sitting on the circle of the heavens, beholdeth all things, both in heaven and earth.—Whose eye pervades the whole sphere of created being; yea and of uncreated night: unto whom are known all his works, and all the works of every creature, not only from the beginning of the world (a poor, low, weak translation) but *ap aios* from all eternity, from everlasting to everlasting: who contains the host of heaven, as well as the children of men, to cry out with wonder and amazement, O the depth! The depth of the riches both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! Which art in heaven—the Lord and ruler of all, superintending and disposing all things: who art the king of kings, and lord of lords, the blessed and only potentate: who art strong, and girded about with power, doing whatsoever pleaseth thee! The Almighty: for whatsoever thou willest, to do is present with thee. In heaven, eminently there. Heaven is thy throne, the place where thine honor particularly dwelleth. But not there alone; for thou fillest heaven and earth, the whole expanse of space. Heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord most high!

Therefore should we serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto him with reverence. Therefore should we think, speak, and act as continually under the eye, in the immediate presence of the Lord, the king.

7. "Hallowed be thy name." This is the first of the six petitions, whereof the prayer itself is composed. The name of God is God himself; the nature of God, so far as it can be discovered to man: it means therefore, together with his existence, all his attributes or perfections, his eternity, particularly signified by his great and incommunicable name Jehovah, as the apostle John translates it, the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end; he which is, and which was, and which is to come: his fulness of being, denoted by his other great name, I am that I am—his omnipresence—his omnipotence; who is indeed the only agent

in the material world, all matter being essentially dull and inactive, and moving only as it is moved by the finger of God: and he is the spring of action in every creature, visible and invisible; which could neither act nor exist, without the continual influx and agency of his almighty power his wisdom clearly deduced from the things that are seen, from the goodly order of the universe—his trinity in unity, and unity in trinity, discovered to us in the very first line of his written word—literally the Gods created, a plural noun joined with a verb of the singular number: as well as in every part of his subsequent revelations, given by the mouth of all his holy prophets and apostles—his essential purity and holiness—and above all, his love, which is in the very brightness of his glory.

In praying that God, or his name may be hallowed or glorified, we pray that he may be known, such as he is, by all that are capable thereof, by all intelligent beings, and with affections suitable to that knowledge: that he may be duly honoured, and feared, and loved by all in heaven above, and in the earth beneath; by all angels and men, whom for that end he has made capable of knowing and loving him to eternity.

8. Thy kingdom come. This has a close connexion with the preceding petition. In order that the name of God might be hallowed, we pray that his kingdom, the kingdom of Christ may come. This kingdom then comes to a particular person, when he repents and believes the gospel: when he is taught of God, not only to know himself, but to know Jesus Christ and him crucified. As this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, so it is the kingdom of God begun below, set up in the believer's heart: The Lord God omnipotent then reigneth, when he is known through Christ Jesus. He taketh unto himself his mighty power; that he may subdue all things unto himself. He goeth on in the soul conquering, and to conquer, till he hath put all things under his feet, till every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

When therefore God shall give his Son the Heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession; when all kingdoms shall bow before him, and all nations shall do him service: When the mountain of



the Lord's house, the church of Christ, shall be established in the top of the mountains; when the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel shall be saved: Then shall it be seen that the Lord is King, and hath put on glorious apparel, appearing to every soul of man, as King of kings, and Lord of lords. And it is meet for all those who love his appearing, to pray that he would hasten the time: That this his kingdom, the kingdom of grace may come quickly and swallow up all the kingdoms of the earth; that all mankind receiving him for their King, truly believing in his name, may be filled with righteousness, and peace, and joy, with holiness and happiness, till they are removed hence into his heavenly kingdom, there to reign with him for ever and ever.

For this also we pray in those words, Thy kingdom come: We pray for the coming of his everlasting kingdom, the kingdom of glory in heaven, which is the continuation and perfection of the kingdom of grace on earth. — Consequently this, as well as the preceding petition, is offered up for the whole intelligent creation, who are all interested in this grand event, the final renovation of all things, by God's putting an end to misery and sin, to infirmity and death, taking all things into his own hands, and setting up the kingdom which endureth throughout all ages.

Exactly answerable to this, are those awful words, in the prayer, at the burial of the dead; "Beseeching thee, that it may please thee of thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, and to hasten thy kingdom: That we with all those that are departed, in the true faith of thy holy name, many have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in thy everlasting glory."

9. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. This is the necessary and immediate consequence, wherever the kingdom of God is come: Wherever God dwells in the soul by faith, and Christ reigns in the heart by love.

It is probable, many, perhaps the generality of men, at the first view of these words, are apt to imagine, they are only an expression of, or petition for resignation: for a readiness to suffer the will of God, whatsoever it be concerning us. And this is unquestionably a divine and excellent temper, a most precious gift of God. But this is

not what we pray for in this petition, at least not in the chief and primary sense of it. We pray, not so much for a passion, as for an active conformity to the will of God, in saying, Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

How is it done by the angels of God in heaven? Those who now encircle his throne rejoicing? They do it willingly; They love his commandments, and gladly hearken to his words. It is their meat and drink to do his will; it is their highest glory and joy. They do it continually; there is no interruption in their willing service. They rest not day nor night, but employ every hour (speaking after the manner of men; otherwise our measures of duration, days, and nights, and hours, have no place in eternity) in fulfilling his commands, in executing his designs, in performing the council of his will. And they do it perfectly. No sin, no defect belongs to angelic minds. It is true, the stars are not pure in his sight, even the morning stars that sing together before him. In his sight, that is, in comparison of him, the very angels are not pure. But this does not imply, that they are not pure in themselves. Doubtless they are; they are without spot and blameless. They are altogether devoted to his will, and perfectly obedient in all things.

If we view this in an other light, we may observe, The angels of God in heaven, do all the will of God. And they do nothing else, nothing but what they are absolutely assured is his will. Again, they do all the will of God, as he willeth, in the manner which pleases him, and no other.—Yea, and they do this, only because it is his will; for this end and no other reason.

10. When, therefore, we pray, That the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven; the meaning is That all the inhabitants of the earth, even the whole race of mankind, may do the will of their Father which is in heaven, as willingly as the holy angels: That these may do it continually, even as they without an interruption of their willing services: Yea, and that they may do it perfectly; that the God of peace, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, may make them perfect in every good work to do his will, and work in them all which is well-pleasing in his sight.

In other words, we pray, That we, and all mankind, may

do the whole will of God in all things : And nothing else, not the least thing but what is the holy and acceptable will of God. We pray that we may do the whole will of God as he willeth, in the manner that pleases him : And, lastly, That we may do it, because it is his will : That this may be the sole reason and ground, the whole and only motive of whatsoever we think, or whatsoever we speak or do.

11. Give us this day our daily bread. In the three former petitions, we have been praying for all mankind. We come now more particularly to desire a supply for our own wants. Not that we are directed even here, to confine our prayer altogether to ourselves : But this and each of the following petitions, may be used for the whole church of Christ upon earth.

By bread we may understand all things needful whether for our souls or bodies : the things pertaining to life and godliness. We understand not barely the outward bread, what our Lord terms the meat which perisheth ; but much more the spiritual bread, the grace of God, the food which endureth unto everlasting life. It was the judgment of many of the ancient fathers, that we are here to understand the sacramental bread also : Daily received in the beginning by the whole church of Christ, and highly esteemed till the love of many waxed cold, as the grand channel whereby the grace of his Spirit was conveyed to the souls of all the children of God.

Our daily bread. The word we render daily has been differently explained by different commentators. But the most plain and natural sense of it seems to be this, which is retained in almost all translations, as well ancient as modern : What is sufficient for this day ; and so for each day, as it succeeds.

12. Give us. For we claim nothing of right, but only of free mercy. We deserve not the air we breathe, the earth that bears or the sun that shines upon us. All our desert, we own, is hell. But God loves us freely. Therefore we ask him to give, what we can no more procure for ourselves, than we can merit it at his hands.

Not that either the goodness or the power of God is a reason for us to stand idle. It is his will, that we should use all diligence in all things, that we should employ our utmost endeavours, as much as if our success were the nat-

ural effect of our own wisdom and strength. And then, as though we had done nothing, we are to depend on him, the giver of every good and perfect gift.

This day. For we are to take no thought for the morrow. For this very end has our wise Creator divided life into these little portions of time, so clearly separated from each other: That we might look on every day, as a fresh gift of God, another life, which we may devote to his glory; and that every evening may be as the close of life, beyond which we are to see nothing but eternity.

13. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. As nothing but sin can hinder the bounty of God from flowing forth upon every creature, so this petition naturally follows the former; that all hindrances being removed, we may more clearly trust in the God of love, for every manner of thing which is good.

Our trespasses. The word properly signifies our debts. Thus our sins are frequently represented in scripture; every sin laying us under a fresh debt to God; to whom we already owe, as it were ten thousand talents. What then can we answer when he shall say, Pay me that thou owest? We are utterly insolvent; we have nothing to pay: We have wasted all our substance. Therefore if he deal with us according to the rigour of his law, if he exact what he justly may, he must command us to be bound hand and foot, and delivered over to the tormentors.

Indeed we are already bound hand and foot, by the chains of our own sins. These, considered with regard to ourselves, are chains of iron and fetters of brass. They are wounds wherewith the world, the flesh and the devil, have gashed and mangled us all over. They are diseases that drink up our blood and spirits, that bring us down to the chambers of the grave. But considered, as they are here, with regard to God, they are debts immense and numberless. Well, therefore, seeing we have nothing to pay, we may cry unto him, that he would frankly forgive us all.

The word translated forgive, implies either to forgive a debt, or to unloose a chain. And if we attain the former, the latter follows of course; if our debts are forgiven, the chains fall off our hands. As soon as ever, thro' the free grace of God in Christ, we receive forgiveness of sins, we receive likewise a lot among those that are sanctified, by

faith which is in him. Sin has lost its power ; it has no dominion over those, who are under grace, that is, in favour with God. As there is now no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus, so they are freed from sin as well as from guilt. The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them, and they walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

14. As we forgive them that trespass against us. In these words our Lord clearly declares, both on what condition, and in what degree or manner we may look to be forgiven of God. All our trespasses and sins are forgiven us, if we forgive, and as we forgive others. This is a point of the utmost importance. And our blessed Lord is so jealous, lest at any time we should let it slip out of our thoughts, that he not only inserts it in the body of his prayer, but presently after repeats it twice over. If, saith he, ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Secondly, God forgives us as we forgive others. So that if any malice or bitterness, if any taint of unkindness or anger remains, if we do not clearly, fully, and from the heart, forgive all men their trespasses, we so far cut short the forgiveness of our own. God cannot clearly and fully forgive us. He may shew us some degree of mercy. But we will not suffer him to blot out all our sins, and forgive all our iniquities.

In the mean time, while we do not from our hearts, forgive our neighbour his trespasses, what manner of prayer are we offering to God, whenever we utter these words? We are indeed setting God at open defiance : we are daring him to do his worst. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us ! That is, in plain terms, “ Do not thou forgive us at all : we desire no favour at thy hands. We pray, that thou wilt keep our sins in remembrance, and that thy wrath may abide upon us.” But can you seriously offer such a prayer to God? And hath he not yet cast you quick into hell? O tempt him no longer ! Now, even now, by his grace, forgive as you would be forgiven ! Now have compassion on thy fellow-servant, as God hath and will have pity on thee.

15. and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Lead us not into temptation. The word translated

temptation, means trial of any kind. And so the English word temptation was formerly taken, in an indifferent sense: although now it is usually understood, of solicitation to sin. St. James uses the word in both these senses; first, in its general, then in its restrained acceptation. He takes it in the former sense when he saith, Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, or approved of God, he shall receive the crown of life. He immediately adds, taking the word in the later sense, Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.— But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, or desire, *exel'komenos*, drawn out of God, in whom alone he is safe, and enticed, caught as a fish with a bait.— Then it is, when he is thus drawn away and enticed, that he properly enters into temptation. The temptation covers him as a cloud: it overspreads his whole soul. Then how hardly shall he escape out of the snare? Therefore we beseech God, not to lead us into temptation, that is (seeing God tempt no man) not to suffer us to be lead into it. But deliver us from evil: rather, from the evil one; *apo tou poneroi*. O *Poneros* is unquestionably the wicked one, emphatically so called, the prince and god of this world, who works with mighty power in the children of disobedience. But all those who are the children of God by faith, are delivered out of his hands. He may fight against them; and so he will. But he cannot conquer, unless they betray their own souls. He may torment for a time; but he cannot destroy; for God is on their side, who will not fail in the end, to avenge his own elect, that cry unto him, day and night, “Lord, when we are tempted, suffer us not to enter into thy temptation. Do thou make a way for us to escape, that the wicked one touch us not.”

16. The conclusion of this divine prayer, commonly called the doxology, is a solemn thanksgiving, a compendious acknowledgment of the attributes and works of God. For thine is the kingdom; the sovereign right of all things that are, or ever were created: yea, thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all ages. The power: The executive power, whereby thou governest all things in thy everlasting kingdom, whereby thou dost whatsoever pleaseth thee, in all places of thy dominion.—

And the glory ; the praise due from every creature, for thy power and the mightiness of thy kingdom, and for all thy wondrous works, which thou workest from everlasting, and shalt do, world without end, for ever and ever ! Amen.—  
So be it !

I believe it will not be unacceptable to the serious reader, to subjoin

*A PARAPHRASE on the LORD'S PRAYER.*

**F**ATHER of all, whose powerful voice,  
Call'd forth this universal frame,  
Whose mercies over all rejoice,  
Thro' endless ages still the same.  
Thou, by thy word, upholdest all ;  
Thy bounteous love to all is shew'd,  
Thou hearest thy every creature call,  
And fillest every mouth with good.

In heaven thou reign'st, enthron'd in light,  
Nature's expanse beneath thee spread ;  
Earth, air, and sea before thy sight,  
And hell's deep gloom are open laid.  
Wisdom, and might, and love are thine,  
Prostrate before thy face we fall,  
Confess thine attributes divine,  
And hail the sovereign Lord of all.

Thee, sovereign Lord, let all confess,  
That moves in earth, or air, or sky,  
Revere thy power, thy goodness bless,  
Tremble before thy piercing eye.  
All ye who owe to him your birth,  
In praise your every hour employ :  
Jehovah reigns ! Be glad, O earth,  
And shout, ye morning stars, for joy.

Son of thy sire's eternal love,  
Take to thyself thy mighty power :  
Let all earth's sons thy mercy prove,  
Let all thy bleeding grace adore.

The triumphs of thy love display :  
 In every heart reign thou alone ;  
 Till all thy foes confess thy sway,  
 And glory ends what grace begun.

Spirit of grace, and health, and power,  
 Fountain of light and love below,  
 Abroad thine healing influence shower,  
 O'er all the nations let it flow.  
 In flame our hearts with perfect love,  
 In us the work of faith fulfill :  
 So not heaven's host shall swifter move  
 Than we on earth to do thy will.

Father, 'tis thine each day to yield  
 Thy children's wants a fresh supply ;  
 Thou cloth'st the lilies of the field,  
 And hearest the young ravens cry.  
 On thee we cast our care ; we live  
 Thro' thee, who know'st our every need ;  
 O feed us with thy grace, and give  
 Our souls this day the living bread.

Eternal, spotless lamb of God,  
 Before the world's foundation slain,  
 Sprinkle us ever with thy blood,  
 O cleanse and keep us ever clean.  
 To every soul (all praise to the)  
 Our bowels of compassion move :  
 And all mankind by this may see  
 God is in us ; for God is love.

Giver and Lord of life, whose power  
 And guardian care for all are free ;  
 To thee, in fierce temptation's hour,  
 From sin and satan let us flee.  
 Thine, Lord, we are, and ours thou art ;  
 In us be all thy goodness shew'd ;  
 Renew, enlarge, and fill our heart  
 With peace and joy, and heaven, and God.



Blessing and honor, praise and love,  
 Co-equal, Co-eternal, Three,  
 In earth below, in heaven above,  
 By all thy works be paid to thee.  
 Thrice holy, thine the kingdom is,  
 The power omnipotent is thine ;  
 And when created nature dies,  
 Thy never-ceasing glories shine.

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## SERMON VII.

*Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount.*

### DISCOURSE VII.

MATTHEW vi. 16, 17, 18.

*Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you they have their reward.*

*But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face :*

*That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy father which is in secret ; and thy father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*

1. **I**T has been the endeavor of satan, from the beginning of the world, to put asunder what God had joined together : to separate inward from outward religion, to set one of these at variance with the other. And herein he has met with no small success, among those who were ignorant of his devices.

Many, in all ages, having a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, have been strictly attached to the righteousness of the law, the performance of outward duties, but in the mean time wholly regardless of inward righteousness, the righteousness which is in God by faith. And ma-

ny have run into the opposite extreme, disregarding all outward duties, perhaps even speaking evil of the law, and judging the law, so far as it enjoins the performance of them.

2. It is by this very device of satan, that faith and works have been so often set at variance with each other. And many who have a real zeal for God, have for a time fallen into the snare on either hand. Some have magnified faith to the utter exclusion of good works, not only from being the cause of our justification, (for we know that man is justified freely by the redemption which is in Jesus) but from being the necessary fruit of it; yea, from having any place in the religion of Jesus Christ. Others, eager to avoid this dangerous mistake, have run as much too far the contrary way; and either maintained, that good works were the cause, at least the previous condition of justification; or spoken of them as if they were all in all, the whole religion of Jesus Christ.

3. In the same manner have the end and the means of religion, been set at variance with each other. Some well-meaning men have seemed to place all religion, in attending the prayers of the church, in receiving the Lord's supper, in hearing sermons and reading books of piety: neglecting mean time, the end of all these, the love of God and their neighbor. And this very thing has confirmed others in the neglect, if not contempt of the ordinances of God; so wretchedly abused to undermine and overthrow the very end they were designed to establish.

4. But of all the means of grace, there is scarce any, concerning which men have run into greater extremes, than that of which our Lord speaks in the above mentioned words, I mean religious fasting. How have some exalted this beyond all scripture and reason? And others utterly disregarded it? As it were, revenging themselves, by undervaluing, as much as the former had overvalued it. Those have spoken of it, as if it were all in all; if not the end itself, yet infallibly connected with it: these, as if it were just nothing as if it were a fruitless labor, which had no relation at all thereto. Whereas it is certain the truth lies between them both. It is not all: nor yet is it nothing. It is not the end, but it is a precious means thereto; a means which God himself has ordained; and in which, therefore, when it is duly used, he will surely give us his blessing.

In order to set this in the clearest light, I shall endeavor to shew, first, what is the nature of fasting, and what the several sorts and degrees thereof: secondly, what are the reasons, grounds, and ends, of it: thirdly, how we may answer the most plausible objections against it: and fourthly, in what manner it should be performed.

1. I shall endeavour to shew, first, what is the nature of fasting, and what the several sorts and degrees thereof.—As to the nature of it, all the inspired writers, both in the Old Testament and the New, take the word, to fast, in one single sense, for not to eat, to abstain from food. This is so clear, that it would be labour lost to quote the words of David, Nehemiah, Isaiah, and the prophets which followed, or of our Lord and his apostles; all agreeing in this, that, to fast, is not to eat for a time prescribed.

2. To this, other circumstances were usually joined by them of old, which had no necessary connexion with it.—Such were the neglect of their apparel, the laying aside those ornaments which they were accustomed to wear: The putting on mourning, the strewing ashes upon their head, or wearing sackcloth next their skin. But we find little mention made in the New Testament, of any of these indifferent circumstances. Nor does it appear that any stress was laid upon them, by the Christians of the purer ages; however some penitents might voluntarily use them, as outward signs of inward humiliation. Much less did the apostles or the Christians cotemporary with them, beat or tear their own flesh. Such discipline as this was not unbecoming the priests or whisperers of Baal. The Gods of the Heathens were but devils; and it was doubtless acceptable to their devil-god, when his priests, cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner, till the blood gushed out upon them: But it cannot be pleasing to him, nor become his followers, who came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

3. As to the degree or measures of fasting, we have instances of some who have fasted several days together. So Moses, Elijah and our blessed Lord, being indued with supernatural strength for that purpose, are recorded to have fasted without intermission, forty days and forty nights.—But the time of fasting, more frequently mentioned in scripture, is, one day, from morning till evening. And this

was the fast commonly observed among the ancient Christians. But besides these, they had also their half-fasts (Semijejunia, as Tertullian styles them) on the fourth and sixth days of the week (Wednesday and Friday) throughout the year : On which they took no sustenance till three in the afternoon, the time when they returned from the public service.

4. Nearly related to this, is what our Church seems peculiarly to mean by the term abstinence : Which may be used when we cannot fast entirely, by reason of sickness or bodily weakness. This is, the eating little ; the abstaining in part ; the taking a smaller quantity of food than usual. I do not remember any scriptural instance of this. But neither can I condemn it. For the scripture does not : It may have its use, and receive a blessing from God.

5. The lowest kind of fasting, if it can be called by that name, is the abstaining from pleasant food. Of this we have several instances in scripture, besides that of Daniel and his brethren : who, from a peculiar consideration, namely, that they might not defile themselves with the portion of the King's meat, nor with the wine which he drank, (a daily provision of which the King had appointed for them) requested and obtained of the prince of the eunuchs, pulse to eat, and water to drink. Perhaps from a mistaken imitation of this, might spring the very ancient custom, of abstaining from flesh and wine during such times as were set apart for fasting and abstinence. If it did not rather arise from a supposition that these were the most pleasant food, and a belief, That it was proper to use what was least pleasing, at those times of solemn approach to God.

6. In the Jewish church, there were some stated fasts. Such was the fast of the seventh month, appointed by God himself, to be observed by all Israel, under the severest penalty. The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, on the tenth day of the seventh month, there shall be a day of atonement ; and ye shall afflict your souls—to make an atonement for you, before the Lord your God. For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. In after ages, several other stated fasts were added to these. So mention is made by the prophet Zechariah, of the fast, not only of the 7th, but also of the fourth, of the fifth and of the tenth month.

In the ancient Christian church there were likewise stated fasts, and those both annual and weekly. Of the former sort was that before Easter; observed by some for eight and forty hours: By others, for an entire week; by many for two weeks; taking no sustenance till the evening of each day. Of the latter, those of the fourth and sixth days of the week, observed (as Ephiphanius writes remarking it as an undeniable fact) *en ole te oikoumen*; in the whole habitable earth, at least, in every place where any Christians made their abode. The annual fasts in our church are, "the forty days of Lent, the ember days at the four seasons, the rogation days, and the vigils or eves of several solemn festivals: The weekly, all Fridays in the year, except Christmas-day."

But besides those which were fixt, in every nation, fearing God, there have always been occasional fasts, appointed from time to time, as the particular circumstances and occasions of each required. So when the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, came against Jehoshaphat to battle: Jehoshaphat set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And so in the fifth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, in the ninth month, when they were afraid of the king of Babylon, the princes of Judah proclaimed a fast before the Lord, to all the people of Jerusalem.

And in like manner, particular persons, who take heed unto their ways, and desire to walk humbly and closely with God, will find frequent occasions for private seasons of thus afflicting their souls, before their father which is in secret. And it is to this kind of fasting that the directions here given do chiefly and primarily refer.

II. 1. I proceed to shew, in the second place, what are the grounds, the reasons, and ends of fasting.

And first, men who are under strong emotions of mind, who are affected with any vehement passion, such as sorrow or fear, are often swallowed up therein, and even forget to eat their bread. At such seasons they have little regard for food, not even what is needful to sustain nature; much less for any delicacy or variety, being taken up with quite different thoughts. Thus when Saul said, I am sore distressed; for the Philistians make war against me, and God is departed from me; it is recorded, he had eaten no bread

all the day nor all the night. Thus those who were in the ship with St. Paul, when no small tempest lay upon them, and all hope that they should be saved was taken away, continued fasting, having taken nothing, no regular meal, for fourteen days together. And thus David, and all the men that were with him, when they heard that the people were fled from the battle, and that many of the people were fallen and dead, and Saul and Jonathan his son were dead also, mourned, and wept and fasted until even, for Saul and Jonathan, and for the house of Israel.

Nay many times they whose minds are deeply engaged, are impatient of any interruption, and even loath their needful food, as diverting their thoughts, from what they desire should engross their whole attention. Even as Saul, when on the occasion mentioned before, he had fallen all along upon the earth, and there was no strength in him, yet said, I will not eat, till his servants, together with the women, compelled him.

2. Here then is the natural ground of fasting. One who is under deep affliction, overwhelmed with sorrow for sin, and a strong apprehension of the wrath of God, would, without any rule, without knowing or considering, whether it were a command of God or not, forget to eat his bread, abstain not only from pleasant, but even from needful food. Like St. Paul, who after he was led into Damascus, was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink, Acts ix. 9.

Yea, when the storm rose high, when an horrible dread overwhelmed one who had been without God in the world; his soul would loathe all manner of meat; it would be unpleasing and irksome to him. He would be impatient of any thing that should interrupt his ceaseless cry, Lord save! or I perish.

How strongly is this exprest by our church, in the first part of the homily on fasting?

“When men feel in themselves the heavy burthen of sin, see damnation to be the reward of it, and behold with the eye of their mind the horror of hell; they tremble, they quake, and are inwardly touched with sorrowfulness of heart, and cannot but accuse themselves and open their grief unto Almighty God, and call unto him for mercy. This being done seriously, their mind is so occupied (taken up) partly

with sorrow and heaviness, partly with an earnest desire to be delivered from this danger of hell and damnation, that all desire of meat and drink is laid apart, and loathsomeness (or loathing) of all worldly things and pleasure cometh in place. So that nothing then liketh them more than to weep, to lament, to mourn, and both with words and behaviour of body to shew themselves weary of life."

3. Another reason or ground of fasting is this. Many of those who now fear God, are deeply sensible how often they have sinned against him, by the abuse of these lawful things. They know, how much they have sinned by excess of food; how long they have transgressed the holy law of God, with regard to temperance, if not sobriety too: how they have indulged their sensual appetites, perhaps to the impairing even their bodily health; certainly to the no small hurt of their soul. For hereby they continually fed and increased that sprightly folly, that airiness of mind, that levity of temper, that gay inattention to things of the deepest concern, that giddiness and carelessness of spirit, which were no other than drunkenness, of soul, which stupefied all their noblest faculties, no less than excess of wine or strong drink. To remove therefore the effect, they remove the cause: they keep at a distance from all excess. They abstain, as far as is possible, from what had nigh plunged them into everlasting perdition. They often wholly refrain; always take care to be sparing and temperate in all things.

4. They likewise well remember, how fulness of bread, increased not only in carelessness and levity of spirit, but also foolish and unholy desires, yea, unclean and vile affections. And this experience puts beyond all doubt. Even a genteel, regular sensuality, is continually sensualizing the soul, and sinking it into a level with the beasts that perish. It cannot be expressed what an effect variety and delicacy of food have on the mind as well as the body; making it just ripe for every pleasure of sense, as soon as opportunity shall invite. Therefore on this ground also every wise man will refrain his soul, and keep it low; will wean it more and more from all those indulgences of the inferior appetites, which naturally tend to chain it down to the earth, and to pollute as well as debase it. Here is another perpetual reason for fasting; to remove the food of lust and sensuality,

to withdraw the incentives of foolish and hurtful desires, of vile and vain affections.

5. Perhaps we need not altogether omit, (altho' I know not if we should do well, to lay any great stress upon it) another reason for fasting, which some good men have largely insisted on : namely, the punishing themselves for having abused the good gifts of God, by sometimes wholly refraining from them : thus exercising a kind of holy revenge upon themselves, for their past folly and ingratitude, in turning the things which should have been for their health, into an occasion of failing. They suppose David to have had an eye to this when he said, I wept and chastened, or punished my soul with fasting : and St. Paul, when he mentions what revenge godly sorrow occasioned in the Corinthians.

6. A fifth, and more weighty reason for fasting, is, that it is an help to prayer : particularly, when we set apart larger portions of time for private prayer. Then especially it is, that God is often pleased to lift up the souls of his servants, above all the things of earth, and sometimes to wrap them up, as it were, into the third heavens. And it is chiefly, as it is an help to prayer, that it has so frequently been found means in the hand of God, of confirming and increasing not one virtue, not chastity only, (as some have idly imagined, without any ground, either from scripture, reason or experience) but also seriousness of spirit, earnestness, sensibility and tenderness of conscience ; deadness to the world, and consequently the love of God and every holy and heavenly affection.

7. Not that there is any natural or necessary connexion, between fasting and the blessings of God conveyed thereby. But he will have mercy as he will have mercy : he will convey whatsoever seemeth him good, by whatsoever means he is pleased to appoint. And he hath in all ages appointed this, to be a means of averting his wrath, and obtaining whatever blessings we may from time to time stand in need of.

How powerful a means this is, to avert the wrath of God, we may learn from the remarkable instance of Ahab.— There was none like him, who did sell himself ; wholly give himself up, like a slave bought with money, “ to work wickedness.” Yet when he “ rent his cloaths and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and went softly ; the word



of the Lord came to Elijah, saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days."

It was for this end, to avert the wrath of God, that Daniel sought God with sackcloth and ashes. This appears from the whole tenor of his prayer, particularly from the solemn conclusion of it. O Lord, according to all thy righteousnesses (or mercies) let thy anger be turned away from thy holy mountain—Hear the prayer of thy servant, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate.—O Lord, hear! O Lord forgive: O Lord hearken and do, for thine own sake, Dan. ix. 3, 16, &c.

8. But it is not only from the people of God that we learn, when his anger is moved, to seek him by fasting and prayer; but even from the Heathens. When Jonah had declared, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed, the people of Nineveh proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them unto the least. For the King of Nineveh arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published thro' Nineveh, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing. Let them not feed, nor drink water." (Not that the beast had sinned, or could repent: but that by their example man might be admonished considering that for his sin, the anger of God was hanging over all creatures.) "Who can tell, if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?"—And their labour was not in vain the fierce anger of God was turned away from them. God saw their works, (the fruits of that repentance and faith, which he had wrought in them by his prophet;) and God repented of the evil that he had said he would do unto them; and he did it not. Jon. iii. 10 &c.

9. And it is a means not only of turning away the wrath of God, but also of obtaining whatever blessings we stand in need of. So when the other tribes were smitten before the Benjamites, all the children of Israel went up unto the house of the Lord, and wept and fasted that day until even: And then the Lord said, Go up again; for to-morrow I will deliver them into thine hand. So Samuel gathered all Israel together, when they were in bondage to the Philistines, and they fasted on that day before the Lord: And

when the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel, the Lord thundered upon them with a great thunder, and discomfited them, and they were smitten before Israel. So Ezra; I proclaimed a fast at the river Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones—and he was intreated for us. So Nehemiah; I fasted and prayed before the God of Heaven, and said, Prosper, I pray thee thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. And God granted him mercy in the sight of the King.

10. In the like manner, the apostles always joined fasting with prayer, when they desired the blessing of God on any important undertaking. Thus we read, Acts xiii.—There were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers—As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, (doubtless for direction in this very affair) the Holy Ghost said separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had (a second time) fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. Ver. 1, 2, 3.

Thus also Paul and Barnabas themselves, as we read in the following chapter, when they returned again to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, confirmed the souls of the disciples; and when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, commended them to the Lord. Ver. 23.

Yea, that blessings are to be obtained in the use of this means, which are no otherwise attainable, our Lord expressly declares, in his answer to his disciples, asking, “why could not we cast him out? Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief; for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit, this kind (of Devils) goeth not out, but by prayer and fasting:”—These being the appointed means of attaining that faith, whereby the very Devils are subject unto you.

11. These were the appointed means. For it was not merely by the light of reason, or of natural conscience, (as it is called) that the people of God have been in all ages directed, to use fasting as a means to these ends. But they

have been from time to time taught it of God himself, by clear and open revelations of his will. Such is that remarkable one by the prophet Joel, "Therefore thus saith the Lord, Turn you unto me, with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning—who knoweth if the Lord will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him? Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; then will the Lord be jealous over his land, and will spare his people. Yea, I will send you corn and wine and oil—I will no more make you a reproach among the Heathen."

Nor are they only temporal blessings which God directs his people to expect in the use of these means. For at the same time that he promised to those who should seek him with fasting, and weeping, and mourning, "I will render you the ears which the grasshopper hath eaten the canker-worm, and the caterpillar and the palmer-worm, my great army," he subjoins, "So shall ye eat and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God—Ye shall also know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God." And then immediately follows the great gospel-promise, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants and upon the hand-maids in those days will I pour out my Spirit."

12. Now whatsoever reasons there were to quicken those of old in the zealous and constant discharge of this duty, they are of equal force still to quicken us. But above all these, we have a peculiar reason for being in fasting often, namely the command of him by whose name we are called. He does not indeed in this place expressly enjoin, either fasting, giving of alms, or prayer. But his directions how to fast, to give alms, and to pray, are of the same force with such injunctions. For the commanding us, to do any thing thus, is an unquestionable command, to do that thing; seeing it is impossible to perform it thus, if it be not performed at all. Consequently, the saying, Give alms, pray, fast in such a manner, is a clear command to perform all those duties; as well as to perform them in that manner, which ti shall in no wise lose its reward.

And this is a still farther motive and encouragement to the performance of this duty ; even the promise which our Lord has graciously annexed to the due discharge of it : Thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. Such are the plain grounds, reasons, and ends of fasting ; such our encouragement to persevere therein, notwithstanding abundance of objections which men, wiser than their Lord, have been continually raising against it.

III. 1. The most plausible of these I come now to consider. And, first, It has been frequently said, " Let a Christian fast from sin, and not from food : this is what God requires at his hands. So he does : but he requires the other also. Therefore this ought to be done, and that not left undone.

View your argument in its full dimensions : and you will easily judge of the strength of it.

" If a christian ought to abstain from sin, then he ought not to abstain from food :

But a christian ought to abstain from sin :

Therefore he ought not to abstain from food."

That a christian ought to abstain from sin, is most true. But how does it follow from hence, that he ought not to abstain from food ? Yea, let him do both the one and the other. Let him, by the grace of God, always abstain from sin ; and let him often abstain from food : for such reasons and ends as experience and scripture plainly shew to be answered thereby.

2. " But is it not better (as it has secondly been objected) to abstain from pride and vanity, from foolish and hurtful desires, from peevishness and anger, and discontent, than from food ?" Without question it is. But here again we have need to remind you of our Lord's words, these things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. And indeed the latter is only in order to the former : it is a means to that great end. We abstain from food with this view, that by the grace of God, conveyed into our souls, through this outward means, in conjunction with all the other channels of his grace which he hath appointed, we may be enabled to abstain from every passion and temper, which is not pleasing in his sight. We refrain from the one, that being endued with power from on high, we may be able to refrain from the other, so that your argument proves

just the contrary to what you designed. It proves that we ought to fast. For if we ought to abstain from evil tempers and desires, then we ought thus to abstain from food : Since these little instances of self-denial are the ways God hath chose, wherein to bestow that great salvation.

3. " But we do not find it so in fact : (this is a third objection). We have fasted much and often. But what did it avail ? We were not a whit better : We found no blessing therein. Nay, we have found it an hindrance rather than an help. Instead of preventing anger, for instance, or fretfulness, it has been a means for increasing them to such a height, that we could neither bear others nor ourselves." This may very possibly be the case. It is possible, either to fast or pray, in such a manner, as to make you much worse than before ; more unhappy, and more unholy. Yet the faults does not lie in the means itself ; but in the manner of using it. Use it still, but use it in a different manner. Do what God commands as he commands it, and then doubtless his promise shall not fail ; his blessing shall be withheld no longer : but when thou fastest in secret, he that seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

4. " But is it not mere superstition (so it has been, fourthly objected) to imagine that God regards such little things as these ?" If you say it is, you condemn all the generation of God's children. But will you say, these were all weak, superstitious men ? Can you be so hardy as to affirm this, both of Moses and Joshua, of Samuel and David, of Jehoshaphat, Ezra, Nehemiah, and all the prophets ? Yea, of a greater than all, the son of God himself ? It is certain, both our master, and all these his servants, did imagine, that fasting is not a little thing, and that he who is higher than the highest doth regard it. Of the same judgment, it is plain, were all his apostles, after they were filled with the Holy Ghost and with wisdom. When they had " the unction of the holy one, teaching them of all things, they still approved themselves the ministers of God, by fasting, as well by the armour of righteousness on the right hand, and on the left. After the bridegroom was taken from them, then did they fast in those days." Nor would they attempt any thing, (as we have seen above) wherein the glory of God was nearly concerned, such as the sending forth la-

borers into the harvest, without solemn fasting as well as prayer.

5. "But if fasting be indeed of so great importance, and attended with such a blessing, is it not best, say some, fifthly to fast always? Not to do it now and then, but to keep a continual fast? To use as much abstinence at all times, as our bodily strength will bear?" Let none be discouraged from doing this. By all means use as little and plain food, exercise as much self-denial herein at all times, as your bodily strength will bear. And this may conduce, by the blessing of God, to several of the great ends above mentioned. It may be a considerable help not only to chastity, but also to heavenly mindedness; to the weaning your affections from things below, and setting them on things above. But this is not fasting, scriptural fasting: it is never termed so in all the bible. It in some measure answers some of the ends hereof; but still it is another thing.— Practise it by all means; but not so as thereby to set aside a command of God, and an instituted means of averting his judgments, and obtaining the blessings of his children.

6. Use continually then as much abstinence as you please: which taken thus, is no other than christian temperance.— But this need not at all interfere with your observing solemn times of fasting and prayer. For instance; your habitual abstinence or temperance, would not prevent your fasting in secret, if you was suddenly overwhelmed with huge sorrow and remorse, and with horrible fear and dismay. Such a situation of mind would almost constrain you to fast: you would loath your daily food: you would scarce endure even to take such supplies, as were needful for the body, till God lifted you up out of the horrible pit, and set your feet upon a rock, and ordered your goings. The same would be the case if you was in agony of desire, vehemently wrestling with God for his blessing. You would need none to instruct you, not to eat bread, till you had obtained the request of your lips.

7. Again: had you been at Nineveh, when it was proclaimed throughout the city, let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock taste any thing; let them not feed or drink water, but let them cry mightily unto God: would your continual fast have been any reason for not bearing part in that gene-

ral humiliation? Doubtless it would not. You would have been as much concerned as any other, not to taste food on that day.

No more would abstinence, or the observing a continual fast, have excused any of the children of Israel, from fasting on the tenth day of the seventh month, the great annual day of atonement. There was no exception for these in that solemn decree, whatsoever soul it shall be, that shall not be afflicted (shall not fast) in that day, he shall be cut off from among his people.

Lastly: had you been with the brethren in Antioch at the time when they fasted and prayed, before the sending forth of Barnabas and Saul, can you possibly imagine that your temperance or abstinence would have been a sufficient cause for your not joining therein? Without doubt, if you had not, you would soon have been cut off from the christian community. You would have deservedly been cast out from among them, "as bringing confusion into the church of God."

IV. 1. I am, in the last place, to shew, in what manner we are to fast, that it may be an acceptable service unto the Lord. And first, let it be done unto the Lord, with our eye singly fixed on him. Let our intention herein be this, and this alone, to glorify our father which is in heaven: to express our sorrow and shame, for our manifold transgressions of his holy law; to wait for an increase of purifying grace, drawing our affections to things above: to add seriousness and earnestness to our prayers: to avert the wrath of God, and to obtain all the great and precious promises, which he hath made to us in Christ Jesus.

Let us beware of mocking God, of turning our fast as well as our prayer into an abomination unto the Lord, by the mixture of any temporal view, particularly by seeking the praise of men. Against this our blessed Lord more peculiarly guards us, in the words of the text. Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, (such were too many who were called the people of God) of a sad countenance; sour, affectedly sad, putting their looks into a peculiar form. For they disfigure their faces, not only by unnatural distortions, but also by covering them with dust and ashes—that they may appear unto them to fast. This is their chief, if not only design. Verily I say unto you, they have their re-

ward, even the admiration and praise of men. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face. Do as thou art accustomed to do at other times, that thou appear not unto them to fast, (let this be no part of thy intention: if they know it without any desire of thine) but unto thy father which is in secret; and thy father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

2. But if we desire this reward, let us beware, secondly, of fancying we merit any thing of God by our fasting. We cannot be too often warned of this; in as much as a desire to establish our own righteousness, to procure salvation of debt, and not of grace, is so deeply rooted in all our hearts: fasting is only a way which God hath ordained, wherein we wait for his unmerited mercy; and wherein, without any desert of ours, he hath promised freely to give us his blessing.

3. Not that we are to imagine, the performing the bare outward act, will receive any blessing from God. "Is it such a fast that I have chosen, saith the Lord: a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sack-cloth and ashes under him?" Are these outward acts, however strictly performed, all that is meant by a man's afflicting his soul? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? No, surely.—If it be a merely external service, it is all but lost labor. Such a performance may possibly afflict the body. But as to the soul it profiteth nothing.

4. Yea, the body may sometimes be afflicted too much, so as to be unfit for the works of our calling. This also we are diligently to guard against: for we ought to preserve our health, as a good gift of God. Therefore care is to be taken, whenever we fast, to proportion the fast to our strength. For we may not offer God murder for sacrifice, or destroy our bodies to help our souls.

But at these solemn seasons, we may, even in great weakness of body, avoid that other extreme, for which God condemns those who of old expostulated with him for not accepting their fasts. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Behold in the day of your fast, you find pleasure, saith the Lord: if we cannot wholly abstain, we may at least abstain from pleasant food; and then we shall not seek his face in vain.



3. But let us take care to afflict our souls as well as our bodies. Let every season either of public or private fasting, be a season of exercising all those holy affections which are implied in a broken and contrite heart. Let it be a season of devout mourning, of godly sorrow for sin : such a sorrow as that of the Corinthians, concerning which the apostle saith, I rejoyce, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance. For ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that he might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow (the sorrow which is according to god, which is a precious gift of his Spirit, lifting the soul to God from whom it flows) worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of. Yea, and let our sorrowing after a godly sort, work in us the same inward and outward repentance ; the same entire change of heart, renewed after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness ; and the same change of life, till we are holy as he is holy in all manner of conversation. Let it work in us the same carefulness, to be found in him, without spot and blameless ; the same clearing of ourselves, by our lives rather than words, by our abstaining from all appearance of evil ; the same indignation, vehement abhorrence of every sin ; the same fear of our own deceitful hearts ; the same desire to be in all things conformed to the holy and acceptable will of God ; the same zeal for whatever may be a means of his glory, and of our growth in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ : and the same revenge against satan and all his works, against all filthiness both of flesh and spirit. 2 Cor. vii. 9, &c.

6. And with fasting let us always join fervent prayer, pouring out our whole souls before God, confessing our sins with all their aggravations, humbling ourselves under his mighty hand, laying open before him all our wants, all our guiltiness and helplessness. This is a season for enlarging our prayers, both in behalf of ourselves and of our brethren. Let us now bewail the sins of our people, and cry aloud for the city of our God : that the Lord may build up Zion, and cause his face to shine on her desolations. Thus we may observe the men of God in ancient times always joined prayer and fasting together. Thus the apostles in all the instances cited above : and thus our Lord joins them in all the discourse before us.

7. It remains only, in order to our observing such a fast as is acceptable to the Lord, that we add alms thereto; works of mercy, after our power, both of the bodies and souls of men. With such sacrifices also God is well pleased. Thus the angel declares to Cornelius, fasting and praying in his house, thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And this God himself expressly and largely declares, "is not this the fast that I have chosen, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that ye brake every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thy own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer: thou shalt cry, and he shall say, here I am. If (when thou fastest) thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul: then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day. And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not."

## SERMON VIII.

*Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount.*

## DISCOURSE VIII.

MATTHEW vi. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23.

*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal :*

*But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal :*

*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

*The light of the body is the eye : if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.*

*But if thine eye be of evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is within thee be darkness, how great is that darkness !*

1. **F**ROM those which are commonly termed religious actions, and which are real branches of true religion, where they spring from a pure and holy intention, and are performed in a manner suitable thereto, our Lord proceeds to the actions of common life, and shews that the same purity of intention, is as indispensably required in our ordinary business, as in giving alms, or fasting or prayer.

And without question the same purity of intention, "which makes our alms and devotions acceptable, must also make our labor or employment, a proper offering to God. If a man pursues his business, that he may raise himself to a state of figure and riches in the world, he is no longer serving God in his employment, and has no more title to a reward from God, than he who gives alms that he may be seen, or prays that he may be heard of men. For vain and earthly designs are no more allowable in our employments, than in our alms and devotions. They are not only evil when they mix with our good works," with our religious actions, "but they have the same evil nature when they en-

ter into the common business of our employments. If it were allowable to pursue them in our worldly employments, it would be allowable to pursue them in our devotions.— But as our alms and devotions are not an acceptable service, but when they proceed from a pure intention, so our common employment cannot be reckoned a service to him, but when it is performed with the same piety of heart.”

2. This our blessed Lord declares in the liveliest manner, in those strong and comprehensive words which he explains, inforces and enlarges upon, throughout this whole chapter. The light of the body is the eye. If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light: but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. The eye is the intention: what the eye is to the body, the intention is to the soul. As the one guides all the motions of the body, so does the other those of the soul. This eye of the soul is then said to be single, when it looks at one thing only; when we have no other design, but to know God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent: to know him with suitable affections, loving him as he hath loved us: to please God in all things: to serve God as we love him, with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength: and to enjoy God in all and above all things, in time and in eternity.

3. If thine eye be thus single, thus fixed on God, thy whole body shall be full of light. Thy whole body—All that is guided by the intention, as the body is by the eye. All thou art: all thou dost: thy desires, tempers, affections; thy thoughts and words and actions. The whole of these shall be full of light: full of true divine knowledge. This is the first thing we may here understand by light. In his light thou shalt see light. He which of old commanded light to shine out of darkness, shall shine in thy heart.— He shall enlighten the eyes of thy understanding, with the knowledge of the glory of God. His spirit shall reveal unto thee the deep things of God. The inspiration of the Holy one shall give thee understanding, and cause thee to know wisdom secretly. Yea, the anointing which thou receivest of him, shall abide in thee, and teach thee of all things.

How does experience confirm this? Even after God hath opened the eyes of our understanding, if we seek or

desire any thing else than God, how soon is our foolish heart darkened? then clouds again rest upon our souls.—Doubts and fears again overwhelm us. We are tossed to and fro, and know not what to do, or which is the path wherein we should go. But when we desire and see nothing but God, clouds and doubts vanish away. We who were sometime darkness are light in the Lord. The night now shineth as the day; and we find the path of the upright is light. God sheweth us the path wherein we should go, and maketh plain the way before our face.

4. The second thing which we may here understand by light, is holiness. While thou seekest God in all things, thou shalt find him in all, the fountain of all holiness, continually filling thee with his own likeness, with justice, mercy and truth. While thou lookest unto Jesus and him alone, thou shalt be filled with the mind that was in him.—Thy soul shall be renewed day by day, after the image of him that created it. If the eye of thy mind be not removed from him, if thou endurest, seeing him that is invisible, and seeking nothing else in heaven or earth, then as thou beholdest the glory of the Lord, thou shalt be transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the spirit of the Lord.

And it is also matter of daily experience, that by grace we are thus saved through faith. It is by faith that the eye of the mind is opened, to see the light of the glorious love of God. And as long as it is steadily fixed thereon, on God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, we are more and more filled with the love of God and man, and with meekness, gentleness, long-suffering; with all the fruits of holiness, which are through Christ Jesus, to the glory of God the Father.

5. This light which fills him who has a single eye, implies, thirdly, happiness as well as holiness. Surely light is sweet, and a pleasant thing to see the sun. But how much more to see the Sun of Righteousness, continually shining upon the soul? And if there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any peace that passeth all understanding, if any rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, they all belong to him whose eye is single. Thus is his whole body full of light. He walketh in the light as God is in the light, rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in every

thing giving thanks, enjoying whatever is the will of God concerning him in Christ Jesus.

6. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If thine eye be evil: We see there is no medium between a single and an evil eye. If the eye be not single, then it is evil. If the intention, in whatever we do, be not singly to God, if we seek any thing else, then our mind and conscience are defiled.

Our eye therefore is evil, if in any thing we do, we aim at any other end than God; if we have any view, but to know and to love God, to please and serve him in all things: if we have any other design than to enjoy God, to be happy in him, both now and forever.

7. If thine eye be not singly fixt on God, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. The veil shall still remain on thy heart. Thy mind shall be more and more blinded, by the God of this world, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine upon thee. Thou wilt be full of ignorance and error touching the things of God, not being able to receive or discern them. And even when thou hast some desire to serve God, thou wilt be full of uncertainty as to the manner of serving him; finding doubts and difficulties on every side, and not seeing any way to escape.

Yea, if thine eye be not single, if thou seek any of the things of earth, thou shalt be full of ungodliness and unrighteousness: thy desires, tempers, affections, being all out of course, being all dark and vile, and vain. And thy conversation will be evil, as well as thy heart, not seasoned with salt, or meet to minister grace unto the hearers, but idle, unprofitable, corrupt, grievous to the Holy Spirit of God.

8. Both destruction and unhappiness are in thy ways; for the way of peace hast thou not known. There is no peace, no settled, solid peace, for them that know not God. There is no true, nor lasting content for any, who do not seek him with their whole heart. While thou aimest at any of the things that perish, all that cometh is vanity. Yea, not only vanity but vexation of spirit, and that both in the pursuit and the enjoyment also. Thou walkest indeed in a vain shadow, and disquietest thyself in vain. Thou walkest in darkness that may be felt. Sleep on; but thou canst not take thy rest. The dreams of life can give pain, and

that thou knowest : but ease they cannot give. There is no rest, in this world or the world to come, but only in God the centre of spirits.

If the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness ! If the intention, which ought to enlighten the whole soul, to fill it with knowledge, and love, and peace, and which, in fact, does so as long as it is single, as long as it aims at God alone : If this be darkness ; if it aim at any thing beside God, and consequently cover the soul with darkness instead of light, with ignorance and error, with sin and misery : O how great is that darkness ! It is the very smoke which ascends out of the bottomless pit ! It is the essential night, which reigns in the lowest deep, in the land of the shadow of death.

9. Therefore lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. If you do, it is plain your eye is evil : It is not singly fixed on God.

With regard to most of the commandments of God, whether relating to the heart of life, the Heathens of Africa or America stand much on a level with those that are called Christians. The Christians observe them (a few only being expected) very near as much as the Heathens. For instance : The generality of the natives of England, commonly called Christians, are as sober and as temperate as the generality of the Heathens, near the Cape of Good-Hope. And so the Dutch or French Christians are as humble and as chaste as the Choctaw or Cherokee-Indians. It is not easy to say, when we compare the bulk of the nations in Europe with those in America, whether the superiority lies on the one side or the other. At least the American has not much the advantage. But we cannot affirm this, with regard to the command now before us. Here the Heathen has far the pre-eminence. He desires and seeks nothing more than plain food to eat, and plain raiment to put on. And he seeks this only from day to day.—He reserves he lays up nothing ; unless it be as much corn at one season of the year as he will need before that season returns. This command therefore, the Heathens, though they know it not, do constantly and punctually observe. They lay up for themselves no treasures upon earth ; no stores of purple or fine linen, of gold or silver, which either moth or rust

may corrupt, or thieves break through and steal. But how do the Christians observe what they profess to receive as a command of the most high God? Not at all; not in any degree; no more than if no such command had ever been given to man. Even the good Christians, as they are accounted by others as well as themselves, pay no manner of regard thereto. It might as well be still hid in its original Greek, for any notice they take of it. In what Christian city do you find one man of five hundred, who makes the least cruple of laying up just as much treasure as he can? Of increasing his goods just as far as he is able? There are indeed those who would not do this unjustly; there are many who will neither rob nor steal; and some who will not defraud his neighbour; nay, who will not gain, either by his ignorance or necessity. But this is quite another point. Even these do not scruple the thing, but the manner of it. They do not scruple the laying up treasures upon earth; but the laying them up by dishonesty. They do not start at disobeying Christ, but at a breach of Heathen morality. So that even these honest men do no more obey this command than any highwayman or a house-breaker. Nay they never design'd to obey it. From their youth up it never enter'd into their thoughts. They were bred up by their Christian parents, masters, and friends, without any instruction at all concerning it: unless it were this, To break it as soon, and as much as they could, and to continue breaking it to their lives' end.

10. There is no one instance of spiritual infatuation in the world which is more amazing than this. Most of these very men read, or hear the bible read; many of them every Lord's day. They have read or heard these words an hundred times, and yet never suspect that they are themselves condemn'd thereby, any more than by those which forbid parents to offer up their sons or daughters unto Moloch.

O that God would speak to these miserable self-deceivers, which his own voice, his mighty voice! That they may at last awake out of the snare of the devil, and the scales may fall from their eyes!

11. Do you ask, what it is to lay up treasures on earth? It will be needful to examine this thoroughly. And let us, first, observe, what is not forbidden in this command, that we may then clearly discern, what is.



We are not forbidden in this command, first, to provide things honest in the sight of all men, to provide wherewith we may render unto all their due, whatsoever they can justly demand of us. — So far from it, that we are taught of God to owe no man any thing. We ought, therefore, to use all diligence in our calling, in order to owe no man any thing. This being no other than a plain law of common justice, which our Lord came not to destroy but to fulfil.

Neither, Secondly, does he here forbid the providing for ourselves such things as are needful for the body; a sufficiency of plain, wholesome food to eat, and clean raiment to put on. Yea, it is our duty, so far as God puts it into power, to provide these things also; to the end we may eat our own bread, and be burdensome to no man.

Nor yet are we forbidden, Thirdly, to provide for our children, and for those of our own household. This also it is our duty to do, even upon principles of Heathen morality. Every man ought to provide the plain necessaries of life, for his own wife and children; and to put them into a capacity of providing these for themselves when he is gone hence and is no more seen. I say of providing these, the plain necessaries of life, not delicacies, not superfluities: and that by their diligent labour, for it is no man's duty to furnish them any more than himself, with the means either of luxury or idleness. But if any man provide not thus for his own children, (as well for the widows of his own house, of whom primarily St. Paul is speaking, in those well known words, to Timothy) he hath practically denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel or Heathen.

Lastly, We are not forbidden in these words to lay up from time to time, what is needful for the carrying on our worldly business, in such a measure and degree, as is sufficient to answer the foregoing purposes: in such a measure, as first, to owe no man any thing; secondly, to procure for ourselves the necessaries of life; and thirdly, to furnish those of our own house with them while we live, and with the means of procuring them when we are gone to God.

12. We may now clearly discern (unless we are unwilling to discern it) what that is which is forbidden here. It is, the designedly procuring more of this world's goods, than will answer the foregoing purposes: the labouring after a larger measure of worldly substance, a larger increase

of gold and silver ; the laying up any more than these ends require, is what is here expressly and absolutely forbidden. If the words have any meaning at all, it must be this : for they are capable of no other. Consequently, whoever he is, that owing no man any thing, and having food and raiment for himself and his household, together with a sufficiency to carry on his worldly business, so far as answers these reasonable purposes : whosoever I say, being already in these circumstances, seeks a still larger portion on earth, he lives in an open, habitual denial of the Lord that bought him.— He hath practically denied the faith, and is worse than an African or American infidel.

13. Hear ye this all ye that dwell in the world, and love the world wherein ye dwell. Ye may be highly esteemed of men ; but ye are an abomination in the sight of God.— How long shall your souls cleave to the dust ? How long will ye load yourselves with thick clay ? When will ye awake and see, that the open, speculative Heathens, are nearer the kingdom of heaven than you ? When will ye be persuaded to choose the better part ; that which cannot be taken away from you ? When will ye seek only to lay up treasures in heaven, renouncing, dreading, abhorring all other ? If you aim at laying up treasures on earth, you are not barely losing your time, and spending your strength for that which is not bread ; for what is the fruit, if you succeed ? You have murdered your own soul. You have extinguished the last spark of spiritual life therein. Now indeed, in the midst of life, you are in death. You are a living man, but a dead Christian. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Your heart is sunk into the dust : your soul cleaveth to the ground. Your affections are set, not on things above, but on things of the earth ; on poor husks that may poison, but cannot satisfy an everlasting spirit, made for God. Your love, your joy, your desire are all placed on the things which perish in the using. You have thrown away the treasure in heaven : God and Christ are lost. You have gained riches and hell-fire.

14. O how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God ! When your Lord's disciples were astonished at his speaking thus, he was so far from retracting it, that he repeated the same important truth, in stronger terms than before. It is easier for a camel to go thro'

the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. How hard is it for them, whose every word is applauded, not to be wise in their own eyes ! How hard, for them not to think themselves better than the poor, base, uneducated herd of men ! How hard, not to seek happiness in their riches, or things dependent upon them ; in gratifying the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life ! O ye rich how can ye escape the damnation of hell ? Only with God all things are possible.

15. And even if you do not succeed, what is the fruit of your endeavoring to lay up treasures on earth ? They that will be rich (*ai boulomenoi ploutein*, they that desire, that endeavour after it, whether they succeed or no) fall into a temptation and snare, a gin, a trap of the devil, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts ; *epi thumias anontous*, desires with which reason hath nothing to do ; such as properly belong, not to rational and immortal beings, but only to the brute beasts, which have no understanding : which drown men in destruction and perdition, in present and eternal misery. Let us but open our eyes, and we may daily see the melancholy proofs of this : men, who desiring, resolving to be rich, coveting after money, the root of all evil, have already pierced themselves through with many sorrows, and anticipated the hell to which they are going.

The cautiousness with which the apostle here speaks, is highly observable. He does not affirm this absolutely of the rich ; for a man may possibly be rich, without any fault of his, by an over-ruling Providence, preventing his own choice. But he affirms it of *ai Boulomenoi ploutein*. Those who desire or seek to be rich. Riches, dangerous as they are, do not always drown men in destruction and perdition. But the desire of riches does : Those who calmly desire and deliberately seek to attain them, whether they do, in fact, gain the world or no, do infallibly loose their own souls. These are they, that sell him who bought them with his blood for a few pieces of gold or silver. : These enter into a covenant with death and hell, and their covenant shall stand. For they are daily making themselves meet to partake of their inheritance with the devil and his angels.

16. O who shall warn this generation of vipers, to flee from the wrath to come ? Not those who lie at their gate,

or cringe at their feet, desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fall from their tables. Not those who court their favour or fear their frown; none of those who mind earthly things. But if there be a Christian upon earth, if there be a man who hath overcome the world, who desires nothing but God, and fears none but him that is able to destroy both body and soul in hell: Thou, O man of God, speak and spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet. Cry aloud, and shew these honourable sinners the desperate condition wherein they stand. It may be, one in a thousand may have ears to hear, may arise and shake himself from the dust; may break loose from these chains that bind him to the earth, and at length lay up treasures in heaven.

17. And if it should be, that one of these, by the mighty power of God, awoke and asked, What must I do to be saved? The answer according to the oracles of God, is clear full and express. God doth not say to thee, Sell all that thou hast. Indeed he who seeth the hearts of men, saw it needful to enjoin this in our peculiar case, that of the young, rich ruler. But he never laid it down for a general rule, to all rich men, in all succeeding generations. His general direction is, first, Be not high-minded. God seeth not as man seeth. He esteems thee not for thy riches, for thy grandeur or equipage, for any qualification or accomplishment, which is directly or indirectly owing to thy wealth, which can be bought, or procured thereby.—All these are with him as dung and dross: let them be so with the also. Beware thou think not thyself to be one jot wiser, or better for all these things. Weigh thyself in another balance: estimate thyself only by the measures of faith and love, which God hath given thee. If thou hast more of the knowledge and love of God than he, thou art on this account and no other, wiser and better, more valuable and honourable than him, who is with the dogs of thy flock.—But if thou hast not this treasure, thou art more foolish, more vile, more truly contemptible, I will not say than the lowest servant under thy roof, but than the beggar laid at thy gate, full of sores.

18. Secondly, trust not in uncertain riches. Trust not in them for help: and trust not in them for happiness.

First, trust not in them for help. Thou art miserably mistaken if thou lookest for this in gold or silver. These

are no more able to set thee above the world, than to set thee above the devil. Know that both the world and the prince of this world laugh at all such preparations against them. These will little avail in the day of trouble : even if they remain in the trying hour. But it is not certain, that they will : for how oft do they make themselves wings and fly away ? But if not, what support will they afford, even in the ordinary troubles of life ? The desire of thy eyes, the wife of thy youth, thy son, thine only son, or the friend which was as thy own soul is taken away at a stroke. Will thy riches re-animate the breathless clay, or call back its late inhabitant ? Will they secure thee from sickness, diseases, pain ? Do these visit the poor only ? Nay ; he that feeds thy flocks or tills thy ground, has less sickness and pain than thou. He is more rarely visited by these unwelcome guests : and if they come there at all, they are more easily driven away from the little cot, than from the cloud-top palaces. And during the time that thy body is chastened with pain, or consumes away with pining sickness, how do thy treasures help thee ? Let the poor heathen answer.

19. But there is at hand a greater trouble than all these. Thou art to die. Thou art to sink into dust ; to return to the ground from which thou wast taken, to mix with common clay. Thy body is to go to the earth as it was, while thy spirit returns to God that gave it. And the time draws on : the years slip away with a swift though silent pace.— Perhaps your day is far spent ; the noon of life is past, and the evening shadows begin to rest upon you. You feel in yourself sure approaching decay. The springs of life wear away apace. Now what help is there in your riches ? Do they sweeten death ? Do they endear that solemn hour ?— Quite the reverse. O death, how better art thou, to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions ? How unacceptable to him is that awful sentence, this night shall thy soul be required of thee ! Or will they repent the unwelcome stroke or protract the dreadful hour ? Can they deliver your soul that it should not see death ? Can they restore the years that are past ? Can they add to your appointed time, a month, a day, an hour, a moment ? Or will the good things you have chosen for your portion here, follow you over the

great gulf? Not so: naked come you into this world; naked must you return.

Surely were not these truths too plain to be observed, because they are too plain to be denied, no man that is to die could possibly trust, for help, in uncertain riches!

20. And trust not in them for happiness. For here also they will be found deceitful upon the weights. Indeed this very reasonable man may infer, from what has been observed already. For if neither thousands of gold and silver, nor any of the advantages or pleasures purchased thereby, can prevent our being miserable, it evidently follows, they cannot make us happy. What happiness can they afford to him, who in the midst of all is constrained to cry out,

“ To my new courts sad thoughts still repair,  
And round my gilded roofs hangs hovering care.”

Indeed experience is here so full, strong, and undeniable, that it makes all other arguments needless. Appeal we therefore to fact. Are the rich and great, the only happy men? And is each of them more or less happy, in proportion to his measure of riches? Are they happy at all? I had well nigh said, they are of all men most miserable!—Rich man, for once, speak the truth from thy heart. Speak both for thyself, and for thy brethren,

“ Amidst our plenty something still—  
To me, to thee, to him his wanting!  
That cruel something unpossess  
Corrodes and leavens all the rest.”

Yea, and so it will, till thy wearisome days of vanity are shut up in the night of death.

Surely then, to trust in riches for happiness, is the greatest folly of all that are under the sun! Are you not convinced of this? Is it possible, you should still expect to find happiness in money, or all it can procure? What! Can silver and gold, and eating and drinking, and horses and servants, and glittering apparel, and diversions and pleasures as they are called, make the happy? They can as soon make thee immortal.

21. These are all dead show. Regard them not. Trust thou in the living God. So shalt thou be safe under the shadow of the almighty ; his faithfulness and truth shall be thy shield and buckler. He is a very present help in time of trouble ; such an help as can never fail. Then shalt thou say, if all thy other friends die, the Lord liveth, and blessed be my strong helper ! He shall remember thee when thou liest sick upon thy bed : when vain is the help of man, when all the things of the earth can give no support, he will make all thy bed in thy sickness. He will sweeten thy pain ; the consolations of God shall cause thee to clap thy hands in the flames. And even when this house of earth is well nigh shaken down, when it is just ready to drop into the dust, he will teach thee to say, O death where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? Thanks be unto God who giveth me the victory through my Lord Jesus Christ.

O trust in him for happiness as well as for help. All the springs of happiness are in him. Trust in him who giveth us all things richly to enjoy. Who of his own rich and free mercy, holds them out to us, as in his own hand, that receiving them as his gift, and as pledges of his love, we may enjoy all that we possess. It is his love gives a relish to all we taste, puts life and sweetness into all, while every creature leads us up to the great creator, and all earth is a scale to heaven. He transfuses the joys that are at his own right hand, into all he bestows on his thankful children : who having fellowship with the father and his son Jesus Christ, enjoy him in all and above all.

22. Thirdly, seek not to increase in goods. Lay not up for thyself treasures upon earth. This is a flat positive command, full as clear, as thou shalt not commit adultery. How then is it possible for a rich man to grow richer, without denying the Lord that bought him ? Yea, how can any man, who has already the necessaries of life, gain, or aim at more, and be guiltless ? Lay not up, saith our Lord, treasures upon earth. If in spite of this, you do and will lay up, money or goods, which moth or rust may corrupt, or thieves break through and steal : if you will add house to house, or field to field, why do you call yourself a christian ? You do not obey Jesus Christ. You do not design it. Why do you name yourself by his name ? Why

call ye me Lord, Lord saith he himself, and do not the things which I say?

23. If you ask, "but what must we do with our goods seeing we have more than we have occasion to use, if we must not lay them up? Must we throw them away?" I answer, if you throw them into the sea, if you were to cast them into the fire and consume them, they would be better bestowed than they are now. You cannot find so mischievous a manner of throwing them away, as either the laying them up for your posterity, or the laying them out upon yourselves, in folly and superfluity. Of all possible methods of throwing them away, these two are the very worst; the most opposite to the gospel of Christ, and the most pernicious to your own soul.

How pernicious to your own soul the latter of these is, has been excellently shewn by a late writer. "If we waste our money we are not only guilty of wasting a talent which God has given us, but we do ourselves this farther harm, we turn this useful talent into a powerful means of corrupting ourselves; because so far as it is spent wrong, so far it is spent in the support of some wrong temper, in gratifying some vain and unreasonable desires, which as christians we are obliged to renounce."

"As wit and fine parts cannot be only trifled away, but will expose those that have them to greater follies: so money cannot be only trifled away, but if it is not used according to reason and religion, will make people live a more silly and extravagant life, than they would have done without it: if therefore you dont spend your money in doing good to others, you must spend it to the hurt of yourself. You act like one that refuses the cordial to his sick friend, which he cannot drink himself without inflaming his blood. For this is the case of superfluous money: if you give it to those who want it, it is a cordial. If you spend it upon yourself in something that you do not want, it only inflames and disorders your mind."

"In using riches where they have no real use, nor we any real want, we only use them to our great hurt, in creating unreasonable desires, in nourishing ill tempers, in indulging foolish passions, and supporting a vain turn of mind. For high eating and drinking, fine cloths and fine houses, state and equipage, gay pleasures and diversions do all of



them naturally hurt and disorder our heart. They are the food and nourishment of all the folly and weakness of our nature. They are all of them the support of something, that ought not to be supported. They are contrary to that sobriety and piety of heart, which relishes divine things.— They are so many weights upon our mind that make us less able and less inclined to raise our thoughts and affections to things above.”

“ So that money thus spent is not merely wasted or lost, but it is spent to bad purposes and miserable effects: to the corruption and disorder of our hearts, to the making us unable to follow the sublime doctrines of the gospel. It is but like keeping money from the poor, to buy poison for ourselves.”

24. Equally inexcusable are those, who lay up what they do not need for any reasonable purposes. “ If a man had hands and eyes, and feet that he could give to those that wanted them; if he should lock them up in a chest, instead of giving them to his brethren, that were blind and lame, should we not justly reckon him an inhuman wretch? If he should rather chuse to amuse himself with hoarding them up, than entitle himself to an eternal reward, by giving them to those that wanted eyes and hands, might we not justly reckon him mad?”

“ Now money has very much the nature of eyes and feet. If therefore we lock it up in chests, while the poor and distressed want it for their necessary uses, we are not far from the cruelty of him, that chuses rather to hoard up the hands and eyes, than to give them to those that want them. If we chuse to lay it up, rather than entitle ourselves to an eternal reward, by disposing of our money well, we are guilty of his madness, that rather chuses to lock up eyes and hands, than to make him self forever blessed, by giving them to those that want them.”

25. May not this be another reason why rich men shall so hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven? A vast majority of them are under a curse, under the peculiar curse of God: Inasmuch as in the general tenor of their lives, they are not only robbing God continually, embezzling and wasting their Lord's goods, and by that very means corrupting their own souls: but also robbing the poor, the hungry, the naked, wronging the widow and the fatherless, and

making themselves accountable for all the want, affliction and distress, which they may, but do not remove. Yea, doth not the blood of all those who perish for want, of what they either lay up, or lay out needlessly, cry against them from the earth? O what account will they give, to him who is ready to judge both the quick and the dead!

26. The true way of employing what you do not want yourselves, you may, fourthly learn from those words of our Lord; lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. Put out whatever thou canst spare, upon better security than this world can afford. Lay up thy treasures in the bank of heaven: And God shall restore them in that day. He that has pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord, and look what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again.

Place that, saith he, unto my account. Howbeit! thou owest me thine own self also!

Give to the poor with a single eye, with an upright heart, and "write, so much given to God" For inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

This is the part of a faithful and wise steward. Not, to sell either his houses or lands, or principal stock, be it more or less, unless some peculiar circumstance should require it, and not to desire or endeavor to increase it any more than to squander it away in vanity: but to employ it wholly to those wise and reasonable purposes, for which his Lord has lodged it in his hands. The wise steward, after having provided his own household with what is needful for life and godliness, makes himself friends with all that remains from time to time of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when he fails, they may receive him into everlasting habitations: That whensoever his earthly tabernacle is dissolved, they who were before carried into Abraham's bosom, after having eaten his bread and worn the fleece of his flock, and praised God for the consolation, may welcome him into paradise, and to the house of God eternal in the heavens.

27. We charge you, therefore who are rich in the world, as having authority from our great Lord and master, to be habitually doing good, and to live in a course of good works. Be ye merciful as your father which is in heaven is merci-

ful, who doth good and ceaseth not. Be ye merciful, "how far?" After your power, with all the ability which God giveth. Make this your only measure of doing good, not any beggarly maxims or customs to the world. We charge you to be rich in good works; as you have much, to give plenteously, freely ye have received; freely give, so as to lay up no treasures but in heaven. Be ye ready to distribute, to every one according to his necessity. Disperse abroad, give to the poor; deal your bread to the hungry. Cover the naked with a garment, entertain the stranger, carry or send relief to them that are in prison. Heal the sick; not by miracle, but through the blessing of God upon your seasonable support. Let the blessing of him that was ready to perish through pining want, come upon thee. Defend the oppressed, plead the cause of the fatherless, and make the widow's heart sing for joy.

28. We exhort you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to be willing to communicate: to be the same spirit (tho' not in the same outward state) with those believers of ancient times, who remained stedfast in that blessed and holy fellowship, wherein none said, that any thing was his own, but they had all things common. Be a steward, a faithful and wise steward, of God and of the poor; differing from them in those two circumstances only, that your wants are first supplied out of the portion of your Lord's goods which remains in your hands, and that you have the blessedness of giving. Thus lay up for yourselves a good foundation, not in the world, which now is, but rather for the time to come, that ye may lay hold on eternal life. The great foundation indeed of all the blessings of God, whether temporal or eternal, is the Lord Jesus Christ, his righteousness and blood, what he hath done, and what he hath suffered for us. And other foundation, in this sense, can no man lay; no not an apostle, no not an angel from heaven. But through his merits, whatsoever we did in his name, is a foundation for a good reward, in the day when every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labor. Therefore, labor thou, not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life. Therefore whatsoever thy hand now findeth to do, do it with thy might. Therefore let

“ No fair occasion pass unheeded by ;  
Snatching the golden moments as they fly,  
Thou by few fleeting years ensure eternity !”

By patient continuance in well doing, seek thou for glory and honor and immortality. In a constant, zealous performance of all good works, wait thou for that happy hour, when the king shall say, I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; naked, and ye cloathed me ; I was sick, and ye visited me ; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Come, ye blessed of my father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world !

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## SERMON IX.

*Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount.*

### DISCOURSE IX.

MATTHEW vi. 24 - 34.

*No man can serve two masters ; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.*

*Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life ; what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment ?*

*Behold the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns : yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ?*

*Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature ?*

*And why take ye thought for raiment ? Consider the lillies of the field how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin :*

*And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*

*Wherefore if God so cloath the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more cloath you, O ye of little faith?*

*Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, what shall we drink? Or, wherewithal shall we be clothed?*

*(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*

*But first seek ye the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.*

*Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*

1. **I**T is recorded of the nations whom the king of Assyria, after he had carried Israel away into captivity, placed in the cities of Samaria, They feared the Lord, and served their own gods. These nations, saith the inspired writer, feared the Lord, performed an outward service to him, (a plain proof that they had a fear of God, though not according to the knowledge) and served their graven images, both their children and their children's children; as did their fathers, so do they unto this day, 2 Kings xvii. 33, &c.

How nearly does the practice of most modern Christians resemble this of the ancient Heathens? they fear the Lord: they also perform an outward service to him, and hereby shew they have some fear of God; but they likewise serve their own gods. There are those who teach them (as there were who taught the Assyrians) the manner of the God of the land; the God to whose name the country bears to this day, and who was once worshiped there with an holy worship. Howbeit, they do not serve him alone: they do not fear him enough for this. But every nation maketh gods of their own, every nation in the cities wherein they dwell. These nations fear the Lord, they have not laid aside the outward form of worshipping him. But they serve their graven images, silver and gold, the work of men's hands. Money, pleasure, and praise, the goods of this world, more than divide their service with the God of Israel. This is the manner both of their chil-

dren and their children's children ; as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.

2. But although, speaking in a loose way, after the common manner of men, those poor Heathens were said to fear the Lord, yet we may observe the Holy Ghost immediately adds, speaking according to the truth and real nature of things. They fear not the Lord, neither do after the commandment which the Lord commanded the children of Jacob, with whom the Lord made a covenant, and charged them saying. Ye shall not fear other gods, nor serve them.—But the Lord your God ye shall fear, and he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies.

The same judgment is past by the unerring Spirit of God, and indeed by all, the eyes of whose understanding he hath opened, to discern the things of God, upon these poor Christians, commonly so called. If we speak according to the truth and real nature of things, they fear not the Lord, neither do they serve him. For they do not after the covenant the Lord hath made with them, saying, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. They serve other gods unto this day. And no man can serve two masters.

3. How vain is it for any man to aim at this? To attempt the serving of two masters. It is not easy to foresee, what must be the unavoidable consequences of such an attempt? Either he will hate the one and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. The two parts of this sentence, although separately proposed, are to be understood in connexion with each other. For the latter part is a consequence of the former. He will naturally hold to him whom he loves. He will so cleave to him, as to perform to him a willing, faithful, and diligent service. And in the mean time, he will so far, at least, despise the master he hates, as to have a little regard to his commands, and to obey them, if at all, in a slight and careless manner. Therefore, whatsoever the wise men of the world may suppose, Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

4. Mammon was the name of one of the Heathen Gods, who was supposed to preside over riches. It is here understood of riches themselves ; gold and silver, or in general, money : And by a common figure of speech, of all

that may be purchased thereby ; such as ease, honor, and sensual pleasure.

But what are we hear to understand, by serving God ? And what by serving mammon ?

We cannot serve God, unless we believe in him. This is the only true foundation of serving him. Therefore, the believing in God, as reconciling the world to himself th. o' Christ Jesus ; the believing in him, as a loving, pardoning God, is the first great branch of his service.

- And, thus to believe in God implies, to trust in him as our strength, without whom we can do nothing, who every moment endues us with power from on high, without which it is impossible to please him : As our help, our only help in time of trouble, who compasseth us about with songs of deliverance : As our shield, our defender, and the lifter up of our head above all our enemies that are round about us.

It implies, to trust in God as our happiness ; as the center of spirits, the only rest of our souls ; the only good who is adequate to all our capacities, and sufficient to satisfy all the desires he hath given us.

It implies (what is nearly allied to the other) to trust in God, as our end ; to have an eye to him in all things ; to use all things only as a means of enjoying him : Where-soever we are, or whatsoever we do, to see him that is invisible, looking on us well-pleased, and refer all things to him in Christ Jesus.

5. Thus to believe, is the first thing we are to understand by serving God. The second is, To love him.

Now, to love God in the manner the scripture describes, in the manner God himself requires of us, and by requiring engages to work in us, is to love him as the One God ; that is, " with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength : " It is, to desire God alone for his own sake ; and nothing else, but with reference to him : To rejoice in God ; to delight in the Lord ; not only to seek, but find happiness in him : To enjoy God as the chiefest among ten thousand ; to rest in him, as our God and our All. In a word, to have such a possession of God, as makes us always happy.

6. A third thing we are to understand by serving God, is To resemble or imitate him.

So the ancient father, *Optimus Dei cultus, imitari quærit colis*. It is the best worship or service of God, to imitate him your worship.

We hear speak, of imitating or resembling him in the spirit of our minds. For here the true christian imitation of God, begins. God is a spirit and they that imitate or resemble him, must do it in spirit and in truth.

Now God is love. Therefore they who resemble him in the spirit of their minds, are transformed into the same image. They are merciful, even as he is merciful. Their soul is all love. They are kind, benevolent, compassionate, tender-hearted: And that not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. Yea, they are like him, loving unto every man, and their mercy extends to all his works.

7. One thing more we are to understand by serving God, and that is, the obeying him; the glorifying him with our bodies, as well as with our spirits; the keeping his outward commandments: The zealously doing whatever he hath enjoined, the carefully avoiding whatever he hath forbidden: The performing all the ordinary actions of life, with a single eye and a pure heart; offering them all in holy, fervent love, as sacrifices to God, through Jesus Christ.

8. Let us consider now, what we are to understand, on the other hand, by serving mammon. And, first, it implies the trusting in riches, in money, or the things purchasable thereby, as our strength, or the means whereby we shall perform, whatever cause we have in hand: the trusting in them as our help, by which we look to be comforted in, or delivered out of trouble.

It implies the trusting in the world for happiness; the supposing that a man's life consisteth (the comfort of his life) in the abundance of the things which he possesseth: the looking for rest, in the things that are seen; for content in outward plenty; the expecting that satisfaction in the things of the world, which can never be found out of God.

And if we do this, we cannot but make the world our end: the ultimate end, if not of all, at least of many of our undertakings, many of our actions and designs: in which we shall aim only at an increase of wealth, at the obtaining pleasure or praise; at the gaining a larger measure of temporal things, without any reference to things eternal.



9. The serving mammon implies secondly, Loving the world : desiring it for its own sake ; the pleasing our joy in the things thereof, and setting our hearts upon them : the seeking (what indeed it is impossible we should find) our happiness therein : the resting with the whole weight of our souls, upon the staff of this broken reed ; although daily experience shews it cannot support, but will only enter into our hand and pierce it.

10. To resemble to be conformed to the world, is a third thing we are to understand by serving mammon : to have not only designs, but desires tempers, affections suitable to those of the world : to be of an earthly sensual mind, chained down to the things of earth : to be self-willed, inordinate lovers of ourselves : to think highly of our own attainments ; to desire and delight in the praise of men : to fear, shun, and abhor reproach : to be impatient of reproof, easy to be provoked, and swift to return evil for evil.

11. To serve mammon is, lastly, to obey the world, by outwardly conforming to its maxims and customs ; to walk as other men walk, in the common road, in the broad, smooth, beaten path ; to be in the fashion, to follow a multitude ; to do like the rest of our neighbours ; that is, to do the will of the flesh and the mind, to gratify our appetites and inclinations : to sacrifice to ourselves, aim at our own ease and pleasure, in the general course both of our words and actions.

Now what can be more undeniably clear, than that we cannot thus serve God and mammon ?

12. Does not every man see, that he cannot comfortably serve both ? That to trim between God and the world, is the sure way to be disappointed in both, and to have no rest either in one or the other ? How uncomfortable a condition must he be in, who having the fear but not the love of God, who serving him, but not with all his heart, has only the toils and not the joys of religion ? He has religion enough to make him miserable, but not enough to make him happy. His religion will not let him enjoy the world ; and the world will not let him enjoy God. So that by halting between both he loses both, and has no real peace either in God or the world.

13. Does not every man see, that he cannot serve both consistently with himself ? What more glaring inconsisten-

cy can be conceived, than must continually appear in his whole behaviour, who is endeavouring to obey both these masters, striving to serve God and mammon? He is indeed a sinner that goeth two ways; one step forward and another backward. He is continually building up with one hand and pulling down with the other. He loves sin and he hates it: he is always seeking, and yet always fleeing from God. He would, and he would not. He is not the same man, for one day, no, not for an hour together. He is a motly mixture of all sorts of contrarieties; a heap of contradictions jumbled in one. O, be consistent with thyself, one way or the other. Turn to the right hand or the left. If mammon be God, serve thou him: if the Lord, then serve him. But never think of serving either at all, unless it be with thy whole heart.

14. Does not every reasonable, every thinking man see, that he cannot possibly serve God and mammon? Because there is the most absolute contrariety, the most irreconcilable enmity between them. The contrariety between the most opposite things on earth, between fire and water, darkness and light, vanishes into nothing, when compared to the contrariety between God and mammon. So that in whatsoever respect you serve the one, you necessarily renounce the other. Do you believe in God through Christ? Do you trust in him as your strength, your help, your shield, and your exceeding great reward? As your happiness? Your end in all, above all things? Then you cannot trust in riches. It is absolutely impossible you should, so long as you have this faith in God. Do you thus trust in riches? Then thou have denied the faith. You do not trust in the living God. Do you love God? Do you seek and find happiness in him? Then you cannot love the world; neither the things of the world. You are crucified to the world, and the world crucified to you. Do you love the world? Are your affections set on things beneath? Do you seek happiness in earthly things? Then it is impossible you should love God. Then the love of the father is not in you. Do you resemble God? Are you merciful as your father is merciful? Are you transformed by the renewal of your mind, into the image of him who created you?—Then thou cannot be conformed to the present world. You have renounced all its affections and lusts. Are you coa-

formed to the world? Does your soul still bear the image of the earthly? Then you are not renewed in the spirit of your mind. You do not bear the image of the heavenly. Do you obey God? Are you zealous to do his will on earth as the angels do in heaven? Then it is impossible you should obey mammon. Then you set the world at open defiance. You trample its customs and maxims under foot, and will neither follow nor be led by them. Do you follow the world? Do you live like other men? Do you please men? Do you please yourself? Then you cannot be a servant of God. You are of your master and father, the devil.

15. Therefore thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Thou shalt lay aside all tho'ts of obeying two masters, of serving God and mammon.— Thou shalt propose to thyself no end, no help, no happiness but God. Thou shalt seek nothing in earth or heaven but him: thou shalt aim at nothing, but to know, to love and enjoy him. And because this is all your business below, the only view you can reasonably have, the one design you are to pursue in all things; “therefore I say unto you (as our Lord continues his discourse) take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.” A deep and weighty direction, which it imports us well to consider and thoroughly to understand.

16. Our Lord does not here require, that we should be utterly without thought, even touching the concerns of this life. A giddy, careless temper is at the farthest remove from the whole religion of Jesus Christ. Neither does he require us to be slothful in business, to be slack and dillatory therein. This likewise is contrary to the whole spirit and genius of his religion. A christian abhors sloth as much as drunkenness, and flees from idleness as he does from adultery. He well knows, that there is one kind of thought and care, with which God is well pleased; which is absolutely needful for the due performance of those outward works, unto which the providence of God has called him.

It is the will of God that every man should labour to eat his own bread: yea, and that every man should provide for his own, for them of his own household. It is likewise his

will, that we should owe no man any thing, but provide things honest in the sight of all men. But this cannot be done, without taking some thought, without having some care upon our minds: yea often, not without long and serious thought, not without much and earnest care. Consequently, this care to provide for ourselves and our household, this thought, how to render to all their dues, our blessed Lord does not condemn. Yea, it is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.

It is good and acceptable to God, that we should so take thought concerning whatever we have in hand, as to have a clear comprehension of what we are about to do, and to plan our business before we enter upon it. And it is right that we should carefully consider from time to time, what steps we are to take therein; as well as that we should prepare all things before hand, for the carrying it on in the most effectual manner. This care, termed by some, "the care of the head," it was by no means our Lord's design to condemn.

17. What he here condemns is, "the care of the heart:" the anxious uneasy care: the care that hath torment, all such care as does hurt, either to the soul or the body.— What he forbids is, that care which sad experience shews, wastes the blood and drinks up the spirits: which anticipates all the misery it fears, and comes to torment us before the time. He forbids only that care, which poisons the blessings of to-day, by fear of what may be to-morrow; which cannot enjoy the present plenty, though apprehensions of future want. This care is not only a sore disease, a grievous sickness of soul, but also an heinous offence against God, a sin of the deepest dye. It is an high affront to the gracious governor and wise disposer of all things, necessarily implying, that the great judge does not do right, that he does not order all things well. It plainly implies, that he is wanting, either in wisdom, if he does not know what things we stand in need of: Or in goodness if he does not provide those things, for all who put their trust in him. Beware therefore that you take not thought in this sense: be ye anxiously careful for nothing. Take no uneasy thought: This is a plain, sure rule, uneasy care is unlawful care.— With a single eye to God do all that in you lies, to provide

things honest in the sight of all men. And then give up all into better hands : leave the whole event to God.

Take no thought of this kind, no uneasy thought even for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment ? If then God gave you life, the greater gift, will he not give you food to sustain it ? If he hath given you the body, how can he doubt, but he will give you raiment to cover it ? More especially, if you give yourselves up to him, and serve him with your whole heart. Behold, see before your eyes, the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; and yet they lack nothing, yet your heavenly father feedeth them. Are not ye much better than they ? Ye that are creatures capable of God ? Are ye not of more account in the eyes of God ? Of a higher rank in the scale of beings ? And which of you by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature ? What profit have you then from this anxious thought ? It is every way fruitless and unavailing.

And why take ye thought for raiment ? Have ye not a daily reproof, wherever you turn your eyes ? “ Consider the lillies of the field how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, ’ is cut down, burnt up and seen no more, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith ? You, whom he made to endure for ever and ever, to be pictures of his own eternity ! Ye are indeed of little faith. Otherwise ye could not doubt of his love and care, no, not for a moment.

19. Therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat, if we lay no treasure upon earth ? What shall we drink, if we serve God with all our strength, if our eye be singly fixed on him ? Wherewithal shall we be clothed, if we are not conformed to the world, if we disoblige those by whom we might be profited ? For after all these things do the gentiles seek, the heathens who know not God. But ye are sensible, your heavenly father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. And he hath pointed out to you an infallible way, of being constantly supplied therewith.—

“ Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

20. Seek ye first the kingdom of God. Before ye give place to any other thought or care, let it be your concern, that the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave his only begotten son, to the end that believing in him, ye might not perish, but have everlasting life, may regain in your heart, may manifest himself in your soul, and dwell and rule there ; that he may cast down every high thing which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Let God have the sole dominion over you. Let him reign without a rival. Let him possess all your heart, and rule alone. Let him be your one desire, your joy, your love : so that all that is within you may continually cry out, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

Seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Righteousness is the fruit of God's reigning in the heart. And what is righteousness but love ? The love of God and of all mankind, flowing from faith in Jesus Christ, and producing humbleness of mind, meekness, gentleness, long suffering, patience, deadness to the world ; and every right disposition of heart, toward God and toward man. And by these it produces all holy actions, whatsoever are lovely or of good report ; whatsoever works of faith and labor of love are acceptable to God and profitable to man.

His righteousness : this is all his righteousness still : it is his own free gift to us, for the sake of Jesus Christ the righteous, through whom alone it is purchased for us : and it is his work : it is he alone that worketh it in us, by the inspiration of the holy spirit.

21. Perhaps the well observing this may give light to some other scriptures, which we have not always so clearly understood. St. Paul, speaking in his epistle of the Romans, concerning the unbelieving Jews, saith, They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. I believe this may be one sense of the words. They were ignorant of God's righteousness, not only of the righteousness of Christ, imputed to every believer, whereby all his sins are blotted out, and he is reconciled to the favor of God : but (which seems

here to be more immediately understood) they were ignorant of that inward righteousness, of that holiness of heart, which is with the utmost propriety termed God's righteousness, as being both his own free gift through Christ and his own work, by his almighty spirit.

And because they were ignorant of this, they went about to establish their own righteousness. They labored to establish that outside righteousness, which might very properly be termed their own. For neither was it wrought by the spirit of God, nor was it owned or accepted of him.—They might work this themselves, by their own natural strength: and when they had done, it was a stink in his nostrils. And yet trusting in this, they would not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God. Yea, they hardened themselves against that faith, whereby alone it was possible to attain it. For Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness, to every one that believeth. Christ, when he said, it is finished, put an end to that law, to the law of external rites and ceremonies, that he might bring in a better righteousness, through his blood, by that one oblation of himself once offered, even the image of God, into the inmost soul of every one that believeth.

22. Nearly related to these are those words of the apostle in his epistle to the Philippians, I count all things but dung, that I may win Christ, an entrance into his everlasting kingdom, and be found in him, believing in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith—Not having my own righteousness, which is of the law; a barely external righteousness, the outside religion I formerly had, when I hoped to be accepted of God, because I was “touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith;” that holiness of heart, that renewal of the soul, he all its desires, tempers and affections, which is of God: in is the work of God and not of man, by faith; through it faith of Christ, through the revelation of Jesus Christ in us, and by faith in his blood; whereby alone we obtain the remission of our sins, and an inheritance among those that are sanctified.

23. Seek ye first the kingdom of God in your hearts, this righteousness, which is the gift and work of God, the image of God renewed in your souls : and all these things shall be added unto you : all things needful for the body ; such a measure of all, as God sees most for the advancement of his kingdom. These shall be added, they shall be thrown in, over and above. In seeking the peace and the love of God, you shall not only find what you more immediately seek, even the kingdom that cannot be moved ; but also what you seek not, not at all for its own sake, but only in reference to the other. You shall find in your way to the kingdom all outward things, so far as they are expedient for you : this care God hath taken upon himself : cast you all your care upon him. He knoweth your wants ; and whatsoever is lacking, he will not fail to supply.

24. Therefore take no thought for the morrow. Not only, take ye no thought, how to lay up treasures on earth, how to increase the worldly substance ; take no thought how to procure more food than you can eat, or more raiment than you can put on : or more money than is required from day to day, for the plain, reasonable purposes of life ; but take no uneasy thought even concerning those things which are absolutely needful for the body. Do not trouble yourself now, with thinking what you shall do, at a season which is yet afar off. Perhaps that season will never come : or it will be no concern of your's ; before then you will have passed through all the waves, and be landed in eternity. All those distant views do not belong to you, who are a creature of a day. Nay, what have you to do with the morrow, more strictly speaking ? why should you perplex yourself without need ? God provides for you to-day what is needful to sustain the life which he hath given you. It is enough : give yourself up into his hands : if you live another day, he will provide for that also.

25. Above all, do not make the care of future things a pretence of neglecting present duty. This is the most fatal way of taking thought for the morrow. And how common is it among men ? Many, if we exhort them to keep a conscience void of offence, to abstain from what they are convinced is evil, do not scruple to reply, " how then must we live ? Must we not take care of ourselves and of our families ? " And this they imagine to be a sufficient reason,



for continuing in known, wilful sin. They say, and perhaps think, they would serve God now, were it not that they should by and by lose their bread. They would prepare for eternity, but they are afraid of wanting the necessaries of life. So they serve the devil for a morsel of bread : they rush into hell for fear of want ; they throw away their poor souls, lest they should some time or other fall short, of what is needful for their bodies.

It is not strange that they who thus take the matter out of God's hand, should be so often disappointed of the very things they seek ; that while they throw away heaven, to secure the things of earth, they lose the one, but do not gain the other. The jealous God, in the wise course of his providence, frequently suffers this. So that they who will not cast their care on God, who taking thought for temporal things, have little concern for things eternal, lose the very portion which they have chosen. There is a visible blast on all their undertakings : whatsoever they do, it doth not prosper. Inasmuch, that after they have forsaken God for the world, they lose what they sought, as well as what they sought not. They fall short of the kingdom of God and his righteousness ; nor yet are other things added unto them.

26. There is another way of taking thought for the morrow, which is equally forbidden in these words. It is possible to take thought in a wrong manner, even with regard to spiritual things ; to be so careful about what may be by and by, as to neglect what is now required at our hands, how insensibly do we slide into this, if we are not continually watching unto prayer ? How easily are we carried away, in a kind of waking dream, projecting distant schemes, and drawing fine scenes in our own imagination ! We think, what good we will do, when we are in such a place, or when such a time is come ! How useful we will be, how plentiful in good works when we are easier in our circumstances ! How earnestly we will serve God, when once such an hindrance is out of the way.

Or, perhaps, you are now in heaviness of soul : God, as it were, hides his face from you. You see little of the light of his countenance ; you cannot taste his redeeming love. In such a temper of mind, how natural is it to say, " O how I will praise God, when the light of his countenance

shall be again lifted up upon my soul? How will I exhort others to praise him, when his love is again shed abroad in my heart? Then I will do thus and thus: I will speak for God in all places: I will not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Then I will redeem the time. I will use to the uttermost every talent I have received." Do not believe thyself. Thou wilt not do it then, unless thou dost it now. He that is faithful in that which is little, of whatsoever kind it be, whether it be worldly substance, or the fear or love of God, will be faithful in that which is much. But if thou now hidest one talent in the earth, thou wilt then hide five: that is, if ever they are given; but there is small reason to expect they ever will. Indeed unto him that hath, that is, uses what he hath, shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly. But from him that hath not, that is, uses not the grace which he hath already received, whether in a larger or smaller degree, shall be taken away even that which he hath.

27. And take no thought for the temptations of to-morrow. This also is a dangerous snare. Think not, "when such a temptation comes, what shall I do, how shall I stand? I feel, I have not power to resist: I am not able to conquer that enemy." Most true: you have not now the power which you do not now stand in need of. You are not able at this time to conquer that enemy; and at this time he does not assault you. With the grace you have now, you could not withstand the temptations which you have not. But when the temptation comes, the grace will come. In greater trials you will have greater strength. When sufferings abound, the consolations of God will in the same proportion abound also. So that in every situation, the grace of God will be sufficient for you. He doth not suffer you to be tempted to-day, above that ye are able to bear. And in every temptation he will make a way to escape. As thy day is, so thy strength shall be.

28. Let the morrow therefore take thought for the things of itself; that is, when the morrow comes, then think of it. Live thou to-day. Be it thy earnest care to improve the present hour. This is your own; and it is your all. The past is as nothing, as though it had never been. The future is nothing to you; it is not your's: perhaps it never will be. There is no depending on what is yet to come;

for you know not what a day may bring forth. Therefore live to-day : lose not an hour : use this moment : for it is your portion. Who knoweth the things which have been before him, or which shall be after him under the sun? The generations that were from the beginning of the world, where are they now? Fled away : forgotten. They were ; they lived their day ; they were shook off the earth, as leaves off their trees. They mouldered away into common dust. Another and another race succeeded ; then they followed the generation of their fathers, and shall never more see the light. Now is thy turn upon the earth. Rejoice, O young man, in the days of thy youth. Enjoy the very, very now ; by enjoying him, whose years fail not. Now let thine eye be singly fixed on him : in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Now give him thy heart : now stay thyself on him : now be thou holy as he is holy. Now lay hold of the blessed opportunity of doing his acceptable and perfect will. Now rejoice to suffer the loss of all things, so thou mayest win Christ.

29. Gladly suffer to-day, for his name's sake, whatsoever he permits this day to come upon thee. But look not at the sufferings of to-morrow. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Evil it is, speaking after the manner of men : whether it be reproach or want, pain or sickness. But in the language of God, all is blessing : it is a precious balm, prepared by the wisdom of God ; and variously dispensed among his children, according to the various sicknesses of their souls. And he gives in one day, sufficient for that day ; proportioned to the want and strength of the patient. If therefore thou snatchest to-day what belongs to the morrow, if thou addest this to what is given thee already, it will be more than thou canst bear : this is the way not to heal, but to destroy thy own soul. Take therefore just as much as he gives thee to-day ; to-day do and suffer his will. To-day give up thyself, thy body, soul, and spirit, to God, thr'o Christ Jesus : desiring nothing, but that God may be glorified in all thou art, all thou dost, all thou sufferest : seeking nothing, but to know God, and his son Jesus Christ, through the eternal spirit : pursuing nothing, but to love him, to serve him, and to enjoy him at this hour, and to all eternity !

Now unto God the father, who hath made me and all the world ; unto God the son, who hath redeemed me and all mankind ; unto God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God : be honor, and praise, majesty and dominion, for ever and ever ! *Amen.*

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## SERMON X.

*Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount.*

### DISCOURSE X.

MATTHEW vii. 1—12.

*Judge not, that ye be not judged.*

*For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*

*And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye ?*

*Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye ; and behold a beam is in thine own eye ?*

*Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then thou shalt see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*

*Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine ; lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rent you.*

*Ask and it shall be given you : seek and ye shall find : knock and it shall be opened unto you.*

*For every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.*

*Or what man is there of you, who, if his son ask bread, will give him a stone ?*

*Or if he ask a fish, will give him a serpent ?*

*If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him ?*

*Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*

1. **O**UR blessed Lord, having now finished his main design, having first delivered the sum of true religion, carefully guarded against those glosses of men, whereby they would make the word of God of none effect: and having next laid down rules touching that right intention, which we are to preserve in all our outward actions: now proceeds to point out the main hindrances of this religion, and concludes all with a suitable application.

2. In the fifth chapter our great teacher has fully described inward religion in its various branches. He has there laid before us those dispositions of soul, which constitute real christianity; the tempers contained in that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord; the affections which when flowing from their proper fountain, from a living faith in God thro' Christ Jesus, are intrinsically and essentially good, and acceptable to God. In the sixth he has shewn, how all our actions likewise, even those that are indifferent in their own nature, may be made holy and good and acceptable to God, by a pure and holy intention — Whatever is done without this, he declares is of no value with God: whereas whatever outward works are thus consecrated to God, are in his sight of great price.

3. In the former part of this chapter he points out the most common and most fatal hindrances of this holiness.— In the latter, he exhorts us by various motives, to break through all, and secure that prize of our high calling.

4. The first hindrance he cautions us against is judging. Judge not, that ye be not judged. Judge not others, that ye be not judged of the Lord, that ye bring not vengeance on your own heads. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again: a plain and equitable rule, whereby God permits you to determine for yourselves, in what manner he shall deal with you in the judgment of the great day.

5. There is no station of life, nor any period of time, from the hour of our first repenting and believing the gospel, till we are made perfect in love, wherein this caution is

not needful for every child of God. For occasions of judging can never be wanting. And the temptations to it are innumerable: many whereof are so artfully disguised, that we fall into the sin, before we suspect any danger. And unspeakable are the mischiefs produced hereby: always to him that judges another: thus wounding his own soul, and exposing himself to the righteous judgment of God: and frequently to those who are judged, whose hands hang down, who are weakened and hindered in their course, if not wholly turned out of the way, and caused to draw back even to perdition. Yea, how often, when this root of bitterness springs up, are many defiled thereby: by reason whereof the way of truth itself is evil spoken of, and that worthy name blasphemed whereby we are called.

6. Yet it does not appear, that our Lord designed this caution, only or chiefly for the children of God: but rather for the children of the world, for men who know not God. These cannot but hear of those, who are not of the world, who follow after the religion above described: who endeavour to be humble, serious, gentle, merciful and pure in heart; who earnestly desire such measures of these holy tempers, as they have not yet attained: and wait for them in doing all good to all men, and patiently suffering evil.—Whoever go but thus far, cannot be hid more than a city set upon an hill. And why do not those, who see their good works, glorify their Father which is in heaven? What excuse have they, for not treading in their steps? For not imitating their example, and being followers of them, as they are also of Christ? Why, in order to provide an excuse for themselves, they condemn those whom they ought to imitate. They spend their time in finding out their neighbour's faults instead of amending their own. They are so busied about others going out of the way, that themselves never come into it at all: at least never get forward, never go beyond a poor dead form of godliness without the power.

7. It is to these more especially that our Lord says, Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, the infirmities, the mistakes the imprudence, the weakness of the children of God; but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou considerest not the damnable impotence, the satantic pride, the accursed self-will, idolatrous

love of the world, which is in thyself, and which make <sup>that he is</sup> whole life an abomination to the Lord. Above all, with <sup>guilty</sup> what supine carelessness and indifference art thou dancing over the mouth of hell? And how then, with what grace, with what decency or modesty, wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, the excess of zeal for God, the extreme self-denial, the too great disengagement from worldly cares and employments, the desire to be day and night in prayer, or hearing the words of eternal life? And behold a beam is in thine own eye! Not a mote like one of these. Thou hypocrite! Who pretendest to care for others and hast no care for thine own soul! Who makes a show of zeal for the cause of God, when in truth thou never lovest nor fearest him! First cast out the beam out of thine own eye. Cast out the beam of impenitence. Know thyself. See and feel thyself a sinner. Feel, that thy inward parts are very wickedness, that thou art altogether corrupt and abominable, and that the wrath of God abideth on thee. Cast out the beam of pride. Abhor thyself. Sink down as in dust and ashes. Be more and more little and mean, and base and vile in thine own eyes. Cast out the beam of self-will. Learn what that meaneth, If any man will come after me, let him renounce himself. Deny thyself and take up thy cross daily. Let thy whole soul cry out, I came down from heaven (for so thou didst, thou never-dying spirit, whether thou knowest it or no) not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me. Cast out the beam of love of the world. Love not the world, neither the things of the world. Be thou crucified unto the world, and the world crucified unto thee. Only use the world, but enjoy God. Seek all thy happiness in him. Above all cast out the grand beam, that supine carelessness and indifference. Deeply consider that one thing is needful, the one thing which thou hast scarce ever thought of. Know and feel, that thou art a poor, vile, guilty worm, quivering over the great gulf! what art thou a sinner born to die: a leaf driven before the wind: a vapour ready to vanish away: just appearing and then scattering into air, to be no more seen: See this, And then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. Then if thou hast leisure from the concerns of thy own soul, thou shall know how to correct thy brother also.

8. But what is properly the meaning of this word, *Judge* not! What is the judging which is here forbidden? It is not the same as evil speaking, although it is frequently joined therewith. Evil speaking, is the relating any thing that is evil, concerning an absent person: whereas judging may indifferently refer, either to the absent or the present. Neither does it necessarily imply the speaking at all, but only the thinking evil of another. Not that all kind of thinking evil of others, is that judging which our Lord condemns. If I see one commit robbery or murder, or hear him blaspheme the name of God, I cannot refrain from thinking ill of the robber or murderer. Yet this is not evil judging: there is no sin in this, nor any thing contrary to tender affection.

9. The thinking, of another, in a manner that is contrary to love, is that judging which is here condemned. And this may be of various kinds. For first we may think another to blame when he is not. We may lay to his charge (at least in our own mind) the things of which he is not guilty. The words which he has never spoke, or the actions which he has never done. Or we may think his manner of acting was wrong, although in reality it was not. And even where nothing can justly be blamed, either in the thing itself, or in the manner of doing it, we may suppose his intention was not good, and so condemn him on that ground; at the same time that he who searches the heart, sees his simplicity and godly sincerity.

10. But we may not only fall into the sin of judging; by condemning the innocent; but also, 2dly, by condemning the guilty, in a higher degree than he deserves. This species of judging is an offence against justice as well as mercy; and yet such an offence as nothing can secure us from but the strongest and tenderest affection. Without this, we readily suppose one who is acknowledged to be in fault, to be more in fault than he really is. We undervalue whatever good is found in him. Nay, we are not easily induced to believe, that any thing good can remain in him, in whom we have found any thing that is evil.

11. All this shews a manifest want of that love which *logizetai kakon* thinketh no evil: which never draws an unjust or unkind conclusion, from any promises whatsoever. Love will not infer, from any person's falling once into an



act of open sin, that he is accustomed so to do, that he is habitually guilty of it. And if he was habitually guilty once, love does not conclude, he is so still: much less, that if he is now guilty of this, therefore he is guilty of other sins also. This evil reasonings all pertain to that sinful judging, which our Lord here guards us against: and which we are in the highest degree concerned to avoid, if we love either God or our own souls.

12. But supposing we do not condemn the innocent, neither the guilty any further than they deserve: still we may not be altogether clear of the snare. For there is a third sort of sinful judging, which is the condemning any person at all where there is not a sufficient evidence. And be the facts ever so true, yet that does not acquit us. For they ought not to have been supposed but proved, and till they were, we ought to have formed no judgment. I say till they were for neither are we excused, although the facts admit of ever so strong proof, unless that proof be produced before we pass sentence, and compared with the evidence on the other side. Nor can we be excused, if ever we pass a full sentence, before the accused has spoken for himself. Even a Jew might teach us this, as a mere lesson of justice abstracted from mercy and brotherly love. "Doth our law, (says Nichodemus,) judge any man before it hear him and know what he doth?" John xvii. 51. Yea, a Heathen could reply, when the chief of the Jewish nation desired to have judgement against his prisoner, "It is not the manner of the Romans to judge any man, before he that is accused have the accusors face to face, and have licence to answer for himself, concerning the crime laid against him."

13. Indeed we could not easily fall into sinful judging, were we only to observe that rule, which \*another of those Heathen Romans affirms to have been the measure of his own practice. "I am so far (says he) from lightly believing every man's, or any mans evidence against another, that I do not easily or immediately believe a mans evidence against himself. I always allow him second thoughts, and many times council too." Go thou, who art called a Christian, and do likewise, lest the Heathen rise and condemn thee in that day.

\* Seneca.

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14. But how rarely should we condemn or judge one another, at least how soon would that evil be remedied, were we to walk by that clear and express rule, which our Lord himself has taught us? If thy brother shall trespass against thee, (or if thou hear or believe that he hath) go and tell him of his fault, between him and thee alone. This is the first step thou art to take. But if he will not hear, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. This is the second step. If he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; either to the overseers thereof, or to the whole congregation. Thou hast then done thy part. Then think of it no more, but commend the whole to God.

15. But supposing thou hast, by the grace of God, cast the beam out of thine own eye, and dost not clearly see the mote or the beam which is in thine brother's eye, yet beware thou dost not receive hurt thyself, by endeavouring to help him. Still, give not that which is holy unto dogs. Do not lightly account any to be of this number. But if it evidently appear, that they deserve the title, then cast ye not your pearls before swine. Beware of that zeal which is not according to knowledge. For this is another great hindrance in their way, who would be perfect as their Heavenly Father is perfect. They who desire this, cannot but desire that all mankind should partake of the common blessing. And when we ourselves first partake of the heavenly gift, the divine evidence of things not seen, we wonder, that all mankind do not see, the things which we see so plainly, and make no doubt at all but we shall open the eyes of all we have any intercourse with. Hence we are for attacking all we meet without delay, and constraining them to see, whether they will or no. And by the ill success of this intemperate zeal, we often suffer in our own souls: to prevent this spending our strength in vain, our Lord adds, this needful caution (needful to all, but more especially to those who are now warm in their first love :) Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine: lest they trample them under foot, and turn again and rent you.

16. Give not that which is holy unto dogs. Beware of thinking that any deserve this appellation, till their is proof such as you can no longer resist. But when it is clearly and

indisputably proved, that they are unholy and wicked men, not only strangers to, but enemies to God, to all righteousness and true holines : give not that which is holy, *to agion*, the holy thing emphatically so called, unto these. The holy, the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, such as were hid from the ages and generations of old, and are now made known to us, only by the revelation of Jesus Christ, and the inspiration of his Holy Spirit ; are not to be prostituted unto these men, who know not if there be any Holy Ghost. Not indeed that the ambassadors of Christ can refrain from declaring them in the great congregation, wherein some of these may probably be. We must speak whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. But this is not the case with private Christians. They do not bear that awful character : nor are they under any manner of obligation, to force these great and glorious truths, on them who contradict and blaspheme, who have a rooted enmity against them. Nay, they ought not so to do, but rather to lead them as they are able to bear. Do not begin a discourse with these, upon a remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. But talk with them in their own manner, and upon their own principles. With the rational, honourable, unjust epicure, reason of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. This is the most probable way to make Felix tremble. Reserve higher subjects for men of higher attainments.

17. Neither cast ye your pearls before swine. Be very unwilling to pass this judgment on any man. But if the fact be plain and undeniable, if it is clear, beyond all dispute, if the swine do not endeavour to disguise themselves, but rather glory in their shame, making no pretence to purity either of heart or life, but working all uncleanness with greediness : then cast not ye your pearls before them.—Talk not to them of the mysteries of the kingdom : of the things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard ; which of consequence, as they have no other inlets of knowledge, no spiritual senses, it cannot enter into their hearts to conceive. Tell not them of the exceeding great and precious promises, which God hath given us in the Son of his love.—What conception can they have, of being made partakers of the divine nature, who do not even desire to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust ? Just as much

knowledge as swine have of pearls, and as much relish as they have for them, so much relish have they for the deep things of God, so much knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel, who are immersed in the mire of this world, in worldly pleasures, desires and cares. O cast not those pearls before these, lest they trample them under their feet, lest they utterly despise what they cannot understand, & speak evil of things which they know not. Nay, it is probable, this would not be the only inconvenience which would follow. It would not be strange, if they were according to their nature, to turn again, and rent you : if they were to return you evil for good, cursing for blessing, and hatred for your good-will. Such is the enmity of the carnal mind against God, and all the things of God. Such is the treatment you are to expect from these, if you offer them the unpardonable affront, of endeavouring to save their souls from death, to pluck them as brands out of the burning !

18. And yet you need not utterly despair even of these, who, for the present, turn again and rent you. For if all your arguments and persuasives fail, there is yet another remedy left ; and one that is frequently found effectual, when no other method avails. This is prayer. Therefore whatever you desire or want, either for others, or for your own soul, ask, and it shall be given you : seek, and ye shall find : knock, and it shall be opened unto you. The neglect of this is a third grand hindrance of holiness. Still we have not, because we ask not. O how meek and gentle, how lowly in heart, how full of love both to God and man, might ye have been at this day, if you had only asked ? If you had continued instant in prayer ! Therefore now, at least, ask, and it shall be given you. Ask, that ye may thoroughly experience, and perfectly practise the whole of that religion, which our Lord has here so beautifully described. It shall then be given you, to be holy as he is holy, both in heart and in all manner of conversation. Seek, in the way he hath ordained, in searching the scriptures, in hearing his word, in meditating thereon, in fasting, in partaking of the supper of the Lord, and surely ye shall find. Ye shall find that pearl of great price, that faith which overcometh the world, that peace which the world cannot give, that love which is the earnest of your inheritance. Knock : continue in prayer, and in every other way of the Lord. Be not

weary or faint in your mind. Press on to the mark. Take no denial. Let him not go until he bless you. And the door of mercy, of holiness, of heaven shall be opened unto you.

19. It is in compassion to the hardness of our hearts, so unready to believe the goodness of God, that our Lord is pleased to enlarge upon this head, and to repeat and confirm what he hath spoken. For every one, saith he, that asketh receiveth : so that none need come short of the blessing. And he that seeketh, even every one that seeketh, findeth, the love and the image of God ; and to him that knocketh, to every one that knocketh, the gate of righteousness shall be opened. So that here is no room for any to be discouraged, as though they might ask, or seek, or knock in vain. Only remember always to pay, to seek, to knock, and not to be faint. And then the promise standeth sure. It is firm as the pillars of heaven. Yea, more firm ; for heaven and earth shall pass away : but his word shall not pass away.

20. To cut off every pretence for unbelief, our blessed Lord, in the following verses, illustrates yet farther what he had said, by an appeal to what passes in our own breasts. What man, saith he, is there of you, who, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone ? Will even natural affection permit you to refuse the reasonable request of one you love ? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent ?— Will he give him hurtful, instead of profitable things ? So that even, from what you feel and do yourselves, you may receive the fullest assurance, as, on the one hand, that no ill effect can possibly attend you asking, so on the other, that it will be attended with that good effect, a full supply of all your wants. For if ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your father which is in heaven, who is pure, unmixt, essential goodness, give good things to them that ask him ? Or, (as he expresses it on another occasion) give the holy ghost to them that ask him ? In him are included all good things ; all wisdom, peace, joy, love : the whole treasures of holiness, and happiness : all that God hath prepared for them that love him.

21. But that your prayer may have its full weight with God, see that ye be in charity with all men. For otherwise it is more likely to bring a curse than a blessing on your

own head : nor can you expect to receive any blessing from God, while you have not charity towards your neighbour. Therefore let this hindrance be removed without delay. Confirm your love towards one another and towards all men. And love them, not in the word only, but in deed and in truth. Therefore all things whatsoever ye would, that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them : for this is the law and the prophets.

22. This is that royal law, that golden rule of mercy as well as justice, which even the heathen emperor caused to be written over the gate of his palace : a rule, which many believe to be naturally engraved on the mind of every one that comes in the world. And thus much is certain, that it commends itself, as soon as heard, to every man's conscience and understanding : insomuch, that no man can knowingly offend against it, without carrying his condemnation in his own breast.

23. This is the law and the prophets. Whatsoever is written in that law which God of old revealed to mankind ; and whatsoever precepts God has given by his holy prophets, which have been since the world began, they are all summed up in these few words, they are all contained in this short direction. And this rightly understood comprizes the whole of that religion, which our Lord came to establish upon earth.

24. It may be understood, either in a positive or negative sense. If understood in a negative sense, the meaning is, " whatever ye would not that men should do to you, do not ye unto them." Here is a plain rule, always ready at hand, always easy to be applied. In all cases relating to your neighbor, make his case your own. Suppose the circumstances to be changed, and yourself to be just as he is now. And then beware that you indulge no temper or thought, that no word pass out of your lips, that you take no step which you should have condemned in him, upon such a change of circumstances. If understood in a direct and positive sense the plain meaning of it is, " whatsoever you could reasonably desire of him, supposing yourself to be in his circumstance, that do, to the uttermost of your power, to every child of man."

25. To apply this in one or two obvious instances. It is clear to every man's own conscience, we would not that

others should judge us, should causelessly or lightly think evil of us. Much less would we that any should speak evil of us, should publish our real faults or infirmities. Apply this to yourself. Do not unto another what you would not he should do unto you: and you will never more judge your neighbor, never causelessly or highly think evil of any one. Much less will you speak evil: you will never mention even the real fault of an absent person, unless so far as you are convinced, it is absolutely needful, for the good of other souls.

26. Again: we would that all men should love and esteem us, and behave towards us, according to justice, mercy and truth. And we may reasonably desire, that they should do us all the good they can do, without injuring themselves; yea, that in outward things (according to the known rule) their superfluities should give way to our conveniences, their conveniences to our necessities, and their necessities to our extremities. Now then let us walk by the same rule; let us do unto all, as we would they should do to us. Let us love and honor all men. Let justice, mercy and truth govern all our minds and actions. Let our superfluities give way to our neighbor's conveniences: (and who then will have any superfluities left?) Our conveniences to our neighbor's necessities, our necessities to his extremities.

27. This is pure and genuine morality. This do and thou shalt live. As many as walk by this rule, peace be to them and mercy: for they are the Israel of God. But then be it observed, none can walk by this rule, (nor ever did from the beginning of the world) none can love his neighbor as himself, unless he first love God. And none can love God, unless he believe in Christ, unless he have redemption thro' his blood, and the spirit of God bearing witness with his spirit, that he is a child of God. Faith therefore is still the root of all, of present as well as future salvation. Still we must say to every sinner, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Thou shalt be saved now, thou mayest be saved for ever; saved on earth, that thou mayest be saved in heaven. Believe in him and thy faith will work by love. Thou wilt love the Lord thy God; because he hath loved thee: thou wilt love thy neighbor as thyself. And then it will be thy glory and joy, to

exert and increase this love, not barely by abstaining from what is contrary thereto, from every unkind thought, word and action, but by shewing all that kindness to every man, which thou wouldst he should shew unto thee.

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## SERMON XI.

*Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount.*

### DISCOURSE XI.

MATTHEW vii. 13 - 14.

*Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way which leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:*

*Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

1. **O**UR Lord having warned us of the dangers, which easily beset us at our first entrance upon real religion, the hindrances which naturally arise from within, from the wickedness of our own hearts: now proceeds to apprise us of the hindrances from without, particularly ill example and ill advice. By one or the other of these, thousands who once ran well, have drawn back unto perdition: yea, many of those who were not novices in religion, who had made some progress in righteousness. His caution therefore against these, he presses upon us, with all possible earnestness, and repeats again and again, in variety of expressions, lest by means we should let it slip. Thus, effectually to guard us against the former, enter ye in, saith he, at the strait gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. To secure us from the latter, beware, saith he, of false prophets. We shall at present consider the former only.



2. Enter ye in, saith our blessed Lord, at the strait gate : for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat : because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

3. In these words we may observe, first, the inseparable properties of the way to hell : Wide is the gate, broad the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat : secondly, the inseparable properties of the way to heaven : straight is that gate, and few there be that find it : thirdly, a serious exhortation grounded thereon. Enter ye in at the strait gate.

I. 1. We may observe, first, the inseparable properties of the way to hell : wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat.

2. Wide indeed is the gate, and broad the way, that leadeth to destruction. For sin is the gate of hell, and wickedness the way to destruction. And how wide a gate is that of sin? How broad is the way of wickedness! The commandment of God is exceeding broad, as extending not only to all our actions, but to every word which goeth out of our lips, yea, every thought that rises in our heart. And sin is equally broad with the commandment, seeing any breach of the commandment is sin. Yea, rather it is a thousand times broader; since there is only one way of keeping the commandment: for we do not properly keep it, unless both the thing done, the manner of doing it, and all the other circumstances are right. But there are a thousand ways of breaking every commandment: so that this gate is wide indeed.

3. To consider this a little more particularly. How wide do those parent sins extend, from which all the rest derive their being? That carnal mind, which is enmity against God pride of heart, self-will and love of the world? Can we fix any bounds to them? Do they not diffuse themselves through all our thoughts, and mingle with all our tempers? Are they not the leaven which leavens, more or less, the whole mass of our affections? May we not, on a close and faithful examination of ourselves, perceive these roots of bitterness continually springing up, infecting all our words, and tainting all our actions? And how innumerable an off-

spring do they bring forth, in every age and nation? Even enough to cover the whole earth with darkness and cruel habitations.

4. O! who is able to reckon up their accursed fruits? To count all the sins, whether against God or our neighbor, not which imagination might paint, but which may be matter of daily, melancholy experience? Nor need we range over all the earth to find them. Survey any one kingdom, any single country or city, or town, and how plenteous is this harvest? And let it not be one of those, which are still overspread with Mahometan or Pagan darkness: but of those which name the name of Christ, which profess to see the light of his glorious gospel. Go no farther than the kingdom to which we belong, the city wherein we are now. We call ourselves christians: yea, and that of the purest sort: we are protestants; reformed christians! But alas! who shall carry on the reformation of our opinions into our hearts and lives? Is there not a cause? For how innumerable are our sins? And those of the deepest dye? Do not the grossest abominations of every kind, abound among us from day to day? Do not sins of every sort cover the land, as the waters cover the sea? Who can count them? Rather go and count the drops of rain, or the sands on the sea-shore. So wide is the gate, so broad is the way that leadeth to destruction.

5. And many there be that go in at that gate: many who walk in that way. Almost as many as go in at the gate of death, as sink into the chambers of the grave. For it cannot be denied, (though neither can we acknowledge it but with shame and sorrow of heart) that even in this, which is called a christian country, the generality of every age and sex, of every profession and employment, of every rank and degree, high and low, rich and poor, are walking in the way of destruction. The far greater part of the inhabitants of this city, to this day live in sin; in some palpable, habitual, known transgression of the law they profess to observe: yea, in some outward transgression, some gross, visible kind of ungodliness or unrighteousness; some open violation of their duty, either to God or man. These then, none can deny, are all in the way that leadeth to destruction.— Add to these those who have a name indeed that they live, but were never yet alive to God: those that outwardly ap-

pear fair to men, but are inwardly full of all uncleanness : full of pride or vanity ; of anger or revenge, of ambition or covetousness : lovers of themselves, lovers of the world, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. These indeed may be highly esteemed of men ; but they are an abomination to the Lord. And how greatly will these saints of the world, swell the number of the children of hell? Yea, add all, whatever they be in other respects, whether they have more or less of the form of godliness, who being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, as the ground of their reconciliation to God and acceptance with him, of consequence have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness which is of God by faith. Now all these things being joined together in one, how terribly true is our Lord's assertion, wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat.

6. Nor does this only concern the vulgar herd, the poor, base, stupid part of mankind. Men of eminence in the world, men who have many fields and yoke of oxen, do not desire to be excused from this. On the contrary, many wise men after the flesh, according to the human methods of judging, many mighty, in power, in courage, in riches, many noble are called : called into the broad way, by the world, the flesh and the devil : and they are not disobedient to that calling. Yea, the higher they are raised in fortune and power, the deeper do they sink into wickedness. The more blessings they have received from God, the more sins do they commit : using their honor or riches, their learning or wisdom, not as means of working out their salvation, but rather of excelling in vice, and so insuting their own destruction.

II. 1. And the very reason why many of these go on so securely in the broad way, is because it is broad : not considering that this is the inseperable property of the way to destruction. Many there be, saith our Lord, who go in thereat : for the very reason why they should flee from it : Even because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

2. This is an inseperable property of the way to heaven. So narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, unto life everlasting, so strait the gate, that nothing unclean, nothing unholy

can enter. No sinner can pass through that gate, until he is saved from all his sins, not only from his outward sins; from this evil conversation received from tradition from his Fathers. It will not suffice, that he hath ceased to do evil and learned to do well. He must not only be saved from all sinful actions, and from all evil and useless discourse; but inwardly changed, thoroughly renewed in the spirit of his mind. Otherwise he cannot pass through the gate of life, he cannot enter into glory.

3. For narrow is the way that leadeth unto life: the way of universal holiness. Narrow indeed is the way of poverty of spirit, the way of holy mourning: the way of meekness, and that of hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Narrow is the way of mercifulness, of love unfeigned; the way of purity of heart; of doing good to all men and of gladly suffering evil, all manner of evil for righteousness-sake.

4. And few there be that find it. Alas! how few even find the way to Heathen honesty? How few are there, that do nothing to another, which the would not another should do unto them? How few that are clear before God, from acts either of injustice or unkindness? How few that do not offend with their tongue; that speak nothing unkind, nothing untrue? What a small proportion of mankind, are innocent even of outward transgressions? And how much smaller a proportion have their hearts right before God? Clean and holy in his sight? Where are they whom his all-searching eye discerns to be truly humble? To abhor themselves in dust and ashes, in the presence of God their Saviour? To be deeply and steadily serious, feeling their wants, and passing the time of their sojourning with fear? Truly meek and gentle, never overcome of evil, but overcoming evil with good? Thoroughly athirst for God, and continually panting after a renewal in his likeness! How thinly are they scattered over the earth, whose souls are enlarged in love to all mankind? And who love God with all their strength, who have given him their hearts, and desire nothing else in earth or heaven? How few are those lovers of God and man, that spend their whole strength in doing Good unto all men? and are ready to suffer all things yea, death itself, to save one soul from eternal death?

5. But while so few are found in the way of life, and so many in the way of destruction, there is great danger lest the torrent of example, should bear us away with them.— Even a single example, if it be always in our sight, is apt to make much impression upon us : especially when it has nature on its side ; when it falls in with our own inclinations. How great then must be the force of so numerous examples, continually before our eyes ; and all conspiring together with our own hearts, to carry us down the stream of nature ? How difficult must it be, to stem the tide, and to keep ourselves unspotted in the world ?

6. What heightens the difficulty still more is, that they are not the rude and senseless part of mankind, at least not these alone, who set us the example, who throug the downward way : but the polite the well bred, the genteel, the wise, the men who understand the world : the men of knowledge, of deep and various learning, the rational, the eloquent ! these are all, or nearly all, against us. And how shall we stand again st these ? Do not their tongues drop manna ? And have they not learned all the arts of soft persuasion ? And of reasoning too : for these are versed in all controvercies and strife of words. It is therefore a small thing with them to prove, that the way is right, because it is broad : that he who follows a multitude, cannot do evil, but only he who will not follow them : that your way must be wrong, because it is narrow ; and because there is so few that find it. Those will make it clear to a demonstration, that evil is good and good is evil : That the way of holiness is the way of destruction, and the way of the world, the only way to heaven.

7. O how can unlearned and ignorant men, maintain their cause against such opponents ! And yet these are not all with whom they must contend, however unequal to the task. For there are many mighty, and noble, and powerful men, as well as wise, in the road that leadeth to destruction. And these have a shorter way of confuting, than that of reason and argument, they usually apply, not to the understanding, but the fears to any that oppose them. A method that seldom fails of success, even where argument profits nothing : as lying level to the capacities of all men : for all can fear, whether they can reason or no. And all who have not a firm trust in God, a sure reliance both on

his power and love, cannot but fear to give any disgust to those, who have the power of the world in their hands. — What wonder therefore if the example of these is a law, to all who know not God ?

8. Many rich are likewise in the broad way. And these apply to the hopes of men, and to all their foolish desires, as strongly and affectually, as the mighty and noble to their fears. So that hardly can you hold on in the way of the kingdom, unless you are dead to all below, unless you are crucified to the world and the world crucified to you, unless you desire nothing more but God.

9. For how dark, how uncomfortable, how forbidding is the prospect on the opposite side ? A strait gate ! A narrow way ! And few finding that gate ! Few walking in the way. Besides, even those few, are not wise men, not men of learning or eloquence. They are not able to reason either strongly or clearly ; they cannot propose an argument to any advantage ; they know not how to prove what they profess to believe ; or to explain even what they say they experience. Surely such advocates as these, will never recommend, but rather discredit the cause they have espoused.

10. Add to this, that they are not noble, not honourable men : (if they were, you might bear their folly.) They are men of no interest, no authority, of no account in the world. They are men and base, low in life ; and such as have no power, if they had the will to hurt you. Therefore there is nothing at all to be feared from them : and there is nothing at all to hope. For the greater part of them may say silver and gold I have none ; at least a very moderate share. Nay, some of them have scarce food to eat or raiment to put on. For this reason, as well as because their ways are not like those of other men, they are every where spoken against, are despised, have their names cast out as evil are variously persecuted, and treated as the filth and offscouring of the world. So that both your fears, your hopes, and all your desires, (except those which you have immediately from God) yea, all your natural passions continually incline you to return in the broad way.

III. 1. Therefore it is, that our Lord so earnestly exhorts, Enter ye in at the straight gate. Or (as the same exhortation is elsewhere expressed) Strive to enter in. —

*Agonizete eisegthein.* Strive as in an agony. For many saith our Lord, shall seek to enter in inolently strive, and shall not be able.

2. 'Tis true, he intimates what may seem another reason for this, for their not being able to enter in, in the words which immediately follow these. For after he had said, Many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able, he subjoins, When once the master of the house is risen up and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without (*arxethe eop erandi*. Rather, Ye stand without; for *arxethe* seems to be only an elegant expletive) and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us: he shall answer, and say unto you, I know you not. Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity. Luke xiii. 26, &c.

3. It may appear, upon a trancient view of these words, that their delaying to seek at all, rather than their manner of seeking, was the reason why they were not able to enter in. But it comes, in effect, to the same thing. They were therefore commanded to depart, because they had been workers of iniquity, because they had walked in the broad road: in other words, because they had not agonized to enter in at the strait gate. Probably they did seek, before the door was shut: but that did not suffice. And they did strive, after the door was shut. But then it was too late.

4. Therefore, strive ye now, in this your day to enter in at the strait gate. And in order hereto, settle it in your hearts, and let it be ever uppermost in your thoughts, that if you are in a broadway, you are in the way that leadeth to destruction. If many go with you, as sure as God is true both they and you are going to hell. If you are walking as the generality of men walk, you are walking to the bottomless pit. Are many wise, many rich, many mighty, or noble travelling with you in the same way? By this token, without going any farther, you know, it does not lead to life. Here is a short, a plain, an infallible rule, before you enter into particulars. In whatever profession you are engaged, you must be singular or be damned. The way to hell has nothing singular in it; but the way to heaven is singularity all over: if you move but one step towards God, you are not as other men are. But regard not this. 'Tis far better to stand alone, than to fall into the pit.— Run then with patience the race which is set before thee,

though thy companions therein are but few. They will not always be so. Yet a little while and thou wilt come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

5. Now then strive to enter in at the strait gate, being penetrated with the deepest sense, of the inexpressible danger your soul is in, so long as you are in a broad way; so long as you are void of poverty of spirit, and all that inward religion, which the many, the rich, the wise account madness. Strive to enter in, being pierced with sorrow and shame, for having so long run on with the unthinking croud, utterly neglecting if not despising that holiness, without which no man can see the Lord. Strive as in an agony of holy fear, lest, a promise being made you of entering into his rest, even that rest which remaineth for the people of God, you should nevertheless come short of it. Strive in all the fever of desire, with groanings which cannot be uttered. Strive by prayer without ceasing, at all times, in all places lifting up your heart to God and giving him no rest, till you awake up after his likeness, and are satisfied with it.

6. To conclude. Strive to enter in at the strait gate, not only by this agony of soul, of conviction, of sorrow, of shame, of desire, of fear, of unceasing prayer, but likewise by ordering thy conversation right, by walking with all thy strength, in all the ways of God, the way of innocence, of piety and of mercy. Abstain from all appearance of evil: do all possible good to all men: deny thyself, thy own will in all things, and take up thy cross daily. Be ready to cut off thy right hand, to pluck out thy right eye and cast it from thee: to suffer the loss of goods, friends, health, all things on earth, so thou mayest enter into the kingdom of heaven.



## SERMON XII.

*Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount.*

## DISCOURSE XII.

MATTHEW vii. 15—20.

*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheeps cloathing, but inwardly they are raving wolves.*

*Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*

*Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.*

*A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*

*Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire.*

*Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

1. **I**T is scarce possible to express or conceive, what multitudes of souls run on to destruction, because they would not be persuaded to walk in a narrow way, even though it were the way to everlasting salvation. And the same thing we may still observe daily. Such is the folly and madness of mankind, that thousands of men still rush on in the way to hell, only because it is a broad way. They walk in it themselves, because others do: because so many perish, they will add to the number. Such is the amazing influence of example, over the weak, miserable children of men! It continually peoples the regions of death, and drowns numberless souls in everlasting perdition.

2. To warn mankind of this, to guard as many as possible against this spreading contagion, God has commanded his watchmen to cry aloud, and shew the people the danger they are in. For this end he has sent his servants the prophets, in their succeeding generations, to point out the narrow path, and exhort all men, not to be conformed to this world. But what if the watchmen themselves fall into the snare, against which they should warn others? What if the prophets prophesy deceit? If they cause the people to

err from the way? What shall be done, if they point out as the way to eternal life, what is in truth the way to eternal death? and exhort others to walk, as they do themselves, in the broad, not the narrow way?

3. Is this an unheard of, is it an uncommon thing? Nay God knoweth it is not. The instances of it are almost innumerable. We may find them in every age and nation. But how terrible is this? When the ambassadors of God, turn agents for the devil? When they who are commissioned to teach men the way to heaven, do in fact teach them the way to hell? These are like the locusts of Egypt, which eat up the residue that had escaped, that had remained after the hail. They devour even the residue of men that had escaped, that were not destroyed by ill example. It is not therefore without cause that our wise and gracious master, so solemnly cautions us against them: Beware saith he of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's cloathing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

4. A caution this of the utmost importance. That it may the more effectually sink into our hearts, let us inquire, first, who these false prophets are; secondly, what appearance they put on; and thirdly, how we may know what they really are, notwithstanding their fair appearance.

1. 1. We are first to inquire, who these false prophets are. And this is needful to do the more diligently, because these very men have so laboured to wrest this scripture to their own (though not only their own) destruction. In order therefore to cut off all dispute, I shall raise no dust (as the manner of some is) neither use any loose, rhetorical exclamations, to deceive the hearts of the simple, but speak rough, plain truths, such as none can deny, who has either understanding or modesty left: and such truths as have the closest connexion with the whole tenor of the preceding discourse. Whereas too many have interpreted these words without any regard to all that went before: as if they bore no manner of relation to the sermon, in the close of which they stand.

2. By prophets here (as in many other passages of scripture, particularly in the New Testament) are meant, not those who foretell things to come, but those who speak in the name of God: those men, who profess to be sent of God, to teach others the way to heaven.

Those are false prophets, who teach a false way to heaven, a way which does not lead thither. Or (which comes in the end to the same point) who do not teach the true.

3. Every broad way is infallibly a false one. Therefore this is one plain, sure rule, "They who teach men to walk in a broad way, a way that many walk in, are false prophets."

Again, the true way to heaven is a narrow way. Therefore this is another plain, sure rule. "They who do not teach men to walk in a narrow way, to be singular, are false prophets."

4. To be more particular. The only true way to heaven, is that pointed out in the preceding sermon. Therefore they are false prophets who do not teach me to walk in this way.

Now the way to heaven, pointed out in the preceding sermon, is the way of lowliness, mourning, meekness, and holy desire, love of God and our neighbour, doing good, and suffering evil for Christ's sake. They are therefore false prophets, who teach us as the way to heaven any other way than this.

5. It matters not, what they call that other way. They may call it faith, or good works: or faith and works: or repentance: or repentance, faith and new obedience. All these are good words. But if under these, or any other terms whatever, they teach men any way distinct from this, they are properly false prophets.

6. How much more do they fall under that condemnation, who speak evil of this good way? But above all, they who teach the directly opposite way? The way of pride, of levity, of passion, of worldly desires, of loving pleasure more than God, of unkindness to our neighbor, of unconcern for good works, and suffering no evil, no persecution for righteousness sake?

7. If it be asked, why, who ever did teach this? Or who does teach it, as the way to heaven? I answer, ten thousand wise and honorable men: even all those, of whatever denomination, who encourage the proud, the trifler, the passionate, the lover of the world, the man of pleasure, the unjust or unkind, the easy, careless, harmless, useless creature, the man who suffers no reproach for righteousness sake, to imagine he is in the way to heaven. These are

false prophets in the highest sense of the word. These are traitors both to God and man. These are no other than the first born of satan : the eldest sons of Apollyon, the destroyer. These are far above the rank of ordinary cut-throats ; for they murder the souls of men. They are continually peopling the realms of night : and whenever they follow the poor souls whom they have destroyed, hell shall be moved from beneath, to meet them at their coming.

II. 1. But do they come now, in their own shape ? By no means. If it were so, they could not destroy. You would take the alarm, and flee for your life. Therefore they put on a quite contrary appearance : (which was the second thing to be considered.) They come to you in sheep's cloathing, although inwardly they are ravening wolves.

2. They come to you in sheep's cloathing ; that is, with an appearance of harmlessness. They come in the most mild, inoffensive manner, without any mark or token of enmity. Who can imagine, that these quiet creatures, would do any hurt to any one : Perhaps they may not be so zealous and active in doing good, as one would wish they were. However, you see no reason to suspect, that they have even the desire to any harm. But this is not all.

3. They come, secondly, with an appearance of usefulness. Indeed to this, to do good they are particularly called. They are set apart for the very thing. They are particularly commissioned, to watch over your soul, and to train you up in eternal life. 'Tis their whole business, to go about doing good, and healing those that are oppressed of the devil. And you have been always accustomed to look up on them in this light, as messengers of God, sent to bring you a blessing.

4. They come, thirdly, with an appearance of religion. All they do is for conscience sake ! They assure you, it is out of mere zeal for God, that they are making God a liar. It is out of pure concern for religion, that they would destroy it root and branch. All they speak is only from love of truth, and a fear lest it should suffer. And it may be, from a regard for the church, and a desire to defend her from all her enemies.

5. Above all, they come with the appearance of love.— They take all these pains, only for your good. They should not trouble themselves about you, but that they have a kind-

ness for you. They will make large profession of their goodwill, of their concern for the danger you are in, and of their earnest desire, to preserve you from error, from being entangled in new and mischievous doctrines. They should be very sorry to see one who means so well, hurried into any extreme, perplexed with strange and unintelligible notions, or deluded into enthusiasm. Therefore it is, that they advise you to keep still, in the plain middle way : and to beware of being righteous overmuch, lest you should destroy yourself.

III. 1. But how may we know, what they really are, notwithstanding their fair appearance ? This was the third thing into which it was proposed to enquire.

Our blessed Lord saw how needful it was for all men to know false prophets, however disguised. He saw likewise, how unable most men were, to deduce a truth through a long train of consequences. He therefore gives us a short and plain rule, easy to be understood by men of the meanest capacities, and easy to be applied upon all occasions. Ye shall know them by their fruits.

2. Upon all occasions you may easily apply this rule. In order to know whether any who speak in the name of God are false or true prophets, is easy to observe, first, what are the fruits of their doctrine, as to themselves ? What effect has it had upon their lives ? Are they holy and unblameable in all things ? What effect has it had upon their hearts ? Does it appear by the general tenor of their conversation, that their tempers are holy, heavenly, divine ? That the mind is in them which was in Christ Jesus ? That they are meek, lowly, patient, lovers of God and man, and zealous of good works ?

8. You may easily observe, secondly, what are the fruits of their doctrine, as to those that hear them ? In many, at least, though not in all : for the apostles themselves, did not convert all that heard them. Have these the mind that was in Christ ? And do they walk as he also walked ? And was it by hearing these men, that they began so to do ?—Were they inwardly and outwardly wicked, till they heard them ? If so, it is a manifest proof, that those are true prophets, teachers sent of God. But if it is not so, if they do not effectually teach either themselves or others to love

and serve God ; it is a manifest proof, that they are false prophets : that God hath not sent them.

4. An hard saying this ! How few can bear it ? This our Lord was sensible of, and therefore condescends to prove it at large, by several clear and convincing arguments. Do men, says he, gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles ? ver. 16. Do you expect that these evil men should bring forth good fruit ? As well might you expect that thorns should bring forth grapes, or that figs should grow upon thistles ! Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit : but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. ver. 17. Every true prophet, every teacher whom I have sent, bringeth forth the good fruit of holiness. But a false prophet, a teacher whom I have not sent, brings forth only sin and wickedness.

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. A true prophet, a teacher sent from God, does not bring forth good fruit sometimes only, but always ; not accidentally, but by a kind of necessity. In like manner, a false prophet, one whom God hath not sent, does not bring forth evil fruit, accidentally or sometimes only, but always and of necessity. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire. ver. 19. Such infallibly will be the lot of those prophets, who bring not forth good fruit, who do not save souls from sin, who do not bring sinners to repentance. Wherefore, let this stand as an eternal rule, by their fruits ye shall know them. ver. 20. They who in fact bring the proud, passionate, unmerciful lovers of the world, to be lowly, gentle lovers of God and man : they are true prophets, they are sent from God, who therefore confirms their word. On the other hand, they whose hearers, if unrighteous before, remain unrighteous still, or at least, void of any righteousness which exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees : they are false prophets ; they are not sent of God ; therefore their word falls to the ground. And without a miracle of grace, they and their hearers together, will fall into the bottomless pit.

5. O beware of the false prophets ! For though they come in sheep's cloathing, yet inwardly they are ravening wolves. They only destroy and devour the flock : they tear them in pieces, if there is none to help them. They

will not, cannot lead you in the way to heaven. How should they? when they know it not themselves. O beware they do not turn you out of the way, and cause you to lose what you have wrought.

6. But perhaps you will ask, if there is such danger in hearing them, ought I to hear them at all? It is a weighty question, such as deserves the deepest consideration, and ought not to be answered, but put upon the calmest thought, the most deliberate reflection. For many years, I have been almost afraid to speak at all concerning it: being unable to determine one way or the other, or to give any judgment upon it. Many reasons there are which readily occur, and incline me to say, "hear them not." And yet what our Lord speaks concerning the false prophets of his own times, seems to imply the contrary. Then spake Jesus unto the multitude and to his disciples, saying, the scribes and the pharisees sit in Moses' seat, are the ordinary, stated teachers in your church: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do. But do not ye after their works: for they say and do not. Now that these were false prophets in the highest sense, our Lord hath shewn during the whole course of his ministry: as indeed he does in those very words, they say and do not. Therefore by their fruits his disciples could not but know them, seeing they were open to the view of all men. Accordingly he warns them again and again, to beware of these false prophets. And yet he does not forbid them to hear even these. Nay, he in effect commands them so to do, in those words, all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do. For unless they heard them, they could not know, much less observe whatsoever they bid them do. Here then our Lord himself gives a plain direction, both to his apostles and the whole multitude, in some circumstances, to hear even false prophets, known and acknowledged so to be.

7. But perhaps it will be said, he only directed to hear them, when they read the scripture to the congregation. I answer, at the same time that they thus read the scripture, they generally expound it too. And here is no kind of intimation, that they were to hear the one, and not the other also. Nay the very terms, all things whatsoever they bid you observe, exclude any such limitation.

7. Again, unto them, unto false prophets, undeniably such, is frequently committed (O grief to speak! For surely these things ought not so to be) the administration of the sacrament also. To direct men therefore, not to hear them would be in effect to cut them off from the ordinances of God. But this we dare not do, considering the validity of the ordinance doth not depend on the goodness of him that administers, but on the faithfulness of him that ordained it, who will and doth meet us in his appointed ways. Therefore on this account likewise I scruple to say, hear not even the false prophets. Even by those who are under a curse themselves, God can, and doth give us his blessing. For the bread which they break we have experimentally known to be the communion of the body of Christ. And the cup which God blest even by their unhallowed lips, was to us the communion of the blood of Christ.

9. All therefore which I can say is this: in any particular case, wait upon God by humble and earnest prayer, and then act according to the best light you have. Act according to what you are persuaded, upon the whole, will be most for your spiritual advantage. Take great care that you do not judge rashly: that you do not lightly think any to be false prophets. And when you have full proof, see that no anger or contempt have any place in your heart. After this, in the presence and in the fear of God, determine for yourself. I can only say, if by experience you find, that the hearing them hurts you, then hear them not: then quietly refrain, and hear those that profit you. If, on the other hand, you find it does not hurt your soul, you then may hear them still. Only take heed how you hear: beware of them and of their doctrine. Hear with fear and trembling, lest you should be deceived, and given up like them, to a strong delusion. As they continually mingle truth and lies, how easily may you take in both together? Hear with fervent and continual prayer, to him who alone teacheth man wisdom. And see that you bring whatever you hear, to the law and to the testimony. Receive nothing untried, nothing till it is weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. Believe nothing they say, unless it is clearly confirmed by passages of holy writ. Wholly reject whatsoever differs therefrom, whatever is not confirmed thereby. And in particular, reject with the utmost abhorrence, whatsoever is des-



cribed as the way of salvation, that is either different from or short of the way, our Lord has marked out in the foregoing discourse.

10. I cannot conclude, without addressing a few plain words, to those of whom we have now been speaking. O ye false prophets, O ye dry bones, hear ye for once the word of the Lord. How long will ye lie in the name of God? Saying, God hath spoken: and God hath not spoken by you. How long will ye pervert the right ways of the Lord, putting darkness for light, and light for darkness? How long will ye teach the way of death, and call it the way of life? How long will ye deliver to satan the souls, whom ye profess to bring unto God?

11. Wo unto you, ye blind leaders of the blind! For ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men. Ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Them that would strive to enter in at the strait gate, ye call back into the broad way. Them that have gone scarce one step in the ways of God, you devilishly caution against going too far. Them that just begin to hunger and thirst after righteousness, you warn, not to be righteous overmuch. Thus you cause them to stumble at the very threshold; yea, to fall and rise no more. O wherefore do ye this? What profit is there in their blood, when they go down to the pit? Miserable profit to you. They shall perish in their iniquity: but their blood will God require at your hands!

12. Where are your eyes? Where is your understanding? Have ye deceived others, till you have deceived yourselves also? Who hath required this at your hands, to teach a way which ye never knew? Are you given up to so strong a delusion, that ye not only teach but believe a lie? And can you possibly believe, that God hath sent you? That ye are his messengers? Nay: if the Lord had sent you, the work of the Lord would prosper in your hand. As the lord liveth, if ye were messengers of God, he would confirm the word of his messengers. But the work of the Lord doth not prosper in your hand: you bring no sinners to repentance. The Lord doth not confirm your word: for you save no souls from death.

13. How can you possibly evade the force of our Lord's words? So full, so strong, so express? How can y

vade knowing yourselves by your fruits? Evil fruits of evil trees! And how should it be otherwise! Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? Take this to yourselves, ye to whom it belongs. O ye barren trees, why cumber ye the ground? Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit. See ye not, that here is no exception? Take knowledge then, ye are not good trees: for ye do not bring forth good fruit. But a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. And so have ye done from the beginning. Your speaking as from God has only confirmed them that heard you, in the tempers, if not works of the devil. O take warning of him in whose name ye speak, before the sentence he hath pronounced take place. Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire.

14 My dear brethren, harden not your hearts. You have too long shut your eyes against the light. Open them now before it is too late; before you are cast into outer darkness. Let not any temporal consideration weigh with you: for eternity is at stake. Ye have run before ye were sent. O go no farther. Do not persist to damn yourselves and them that hear you! You have no fruit for your labors. And why is this? Even because the Lord is not with you. But can you go this warfare at your own cost? It cannot be. Then humble yourselves before him. Cry unto him out of the dust, that he may first quicken thy soul: give thee the faith that worketh by love: that is lowly and meek, pure and merciful, zealous of good works: rejoicing in tribulation, in reproach, in distress, in persecution for righteousness sake. So shall the spirit of glory and of Christ rest upon thee, and it shall appear, that God hath sent thee. So shalt thou indeed do the work of an evangelist, and make full proof of thy ministry. So shall the word of God in thy mouth be an hammer that breaketh the rocks in pieces. It shall then be known by thy fruits, that thou art a prophet of the Lord, even by the children whom God hath given thee. And having turned many to righteousness, thou shalt shine as the stars for ever and ever!

## SERMON XIII.

*Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount.*

## DISCOURSE XIII.

MATTHEW vii. 21—27.

*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name have done many wonderful works?*

*And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity.*

*Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.*

*And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.*

*And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:*

*And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell and great was the fall of it.*

1. **O**UR Divine Teacher having declared the whole council of God, with regard to the way of salvation, and observed the chief hindrances of those who desire to walk therein: now closes the whole with these weighty words; thereby as were setting his seal to his prophecy, and impressing his whole authority on what he had delivered, that it might stand firm to all generations.

2. For thus saith the Lord, that none may ever conceive there is any other way than this, Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord; have

we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity. Therefore every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon the house: and it fell and great was the fall of it.

3. I design in the following discourse, first, To consider the case of him, who thus builds his house upon the sand: Secondly, to shew the wisdom of him who builds upon a rock: and, thirdly, To conclude with a practical application.

I. 1. And, first, I am to consider the case of him who builds his house upon the sand. It is concerning him our Lord saith, not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord; shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. And this is a decree which cannot pass: which standeth fast for ever and ever. It therefore imports us in the highest degree, thoroughly to understand the force of these words. Now, what are we to understand by that expression, That saith unto me, Lord, Lord? It undoubtedly means, "that thinks of going to heaven by any other way than that which I have now described." It therefore implies, (to begin at the lowest point) all good works, all verbal religion. It includes whatever creeds we may rehearse, whatever professions of faith we make: whatever number of prayers we may repeat, whatever thanksgivings we read or say to God. We may speak good of his name; and declare his loving kindness to the children of men. We may be talking of all his mighty acts, and telling of his salvation from day to day. By comparing spiritual things with spiritual, we may shew the meaning of the oracles of God. We may explain the mysteries of his kingdom, which have been hid from the beginning of the world. We may speak with the tongue of angels rather than men, concerning the deep things of God. We may proclaim to sinners, Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. Yea, we may do this with such a measure of the power of God, and such demonstrations of his Spirit, as to save many souls from death, and hide a multitude of sins. And yet it is very

possible, all this may be no more than saying, Lord, Lord! After I have thus successively preached to others, still I myself may be cast away. I may, in the hand of God, snatch many souls from hell, and yet drop into it when I have done. I may bring many others to the kingdom of heaven, and yet myself never enter there. Reader, if God hath ever blest my word to thy soul, pray that he may be merciful to me a sinner!

2. The saying, Lord, Lord! may, secondly, imply, The doing no harm. We may abstain from every presumptuous sin, from every kind of outward wickedness. We may refrain from all those ways of acting or speaking, which are forbidden in holy writ. We may be able to say to all those among whom we live, Which of you convinceth me of sin? We may have a conscience void of any external offence, towards God and towards man. We may be clear of uncleanness, ungodliness, and unrighteousness, as to the outward act: or (as the apostle testifies concerning himself) touching the righteousness of the law, *i. e.* outward righteousness, blameless. But yet we are not hereby justified. Still this is no more than saying, Lord, Lord! And if we go no farther than this, we shall never enter the kingdom of heaven.

3. The saying Lord, Lord! may imply, thirdly, many of what are usually stiled good works. A man may attend the supper of the Lord, may hear abundance of excellent sermons, and omit no opportunity of partaking all the other ordinances of God. I may do good to my neighbour, deal my bread to the hungry, and cover the naked with a garment. I may be so zealous of good works, as even to give all my goods to feed the poor. Yea, and I may do all this, with a desire to please God, and a real belief that I do please him thereby: (which is undeniably the case of those our Lord introduces, saying unto him, Lord, Lord!) and still I may have no part, in the glory which shall be revealed.

4. If any man marvels at this, let him acknowledge he is a stranger to the whole religion of Jesus Christ: and in particular, to that perfect portraiture thereof, which he has set before us in this discourse. For how far short is all this, of that righteousness and true holiness, which he has described therein! how widely distant from that inward

kingdom of heaven, which is now opened in the believing soul? Which is first sown in the heart as a grain of mustard seed, but afterwards putteth forth great branches, on which grow all the fruits of righteousness, every good temper and word and work.

5. Yet as clearly as he had declared this, as frequently as he had repeated, That none who have not this kingdom of God within them, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: our Lord well knew, that many would not receive this saying, and therefore confirms it yet again: Many (saith he; not one; not a few only; it is not a rare or an uncommon case) shall say unto me in that day: not only, we have said many prayers; we have spoken thy praise; we have refrained from evil; we have exercised ourselves in doing good: but what is abundantly more than this, We have prophesied in thy name. In thy name have we cast out devils; in thy name done many wonderful works. We have prophesied: we have declared thy will to mankind; we have shewed sinners the way to peace and glory. And we have done this in thy name, according to the truth of thy gospel. Yea, and by thy authority, who didst confirm the word, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.— For in or by thy name, by the power of thy word and of thy Spirit, have we cast out devils; out of the souls which they had long claimed as their own, and whereof they had full and quiet possession. And in thy name, by the power not our own, have we done many wonderful works: inso-much that even the dead heard the voice of the Son of God speaking by us, and lived. And then will I profess, even unto them, I never knew you: no, not then, when you were casting out devils in my name. Even then I did not know you as my own: for your heart was not right toward God. Ye were not yourselves meek and lowly, ye were not lovers of God, and of all mankind; ye were not renewed in the image of God. Ye were not holy, as I am holy. Depart from me, ye who notwithstanding all this, are workers of iniquity; *anomia*. Ye are strangers of my law, my law of holy and perfect love.

6. It is to put this beyond all possibility of contradiction, that our Lord confirms it by that opposite comparison. Every one saith he, who heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which

built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; as they will surely do, sooner or later, upon every soul of man; even the floods of outward affliction, or inward temptation; the storms of pride, anger, fear or desire. And it fell and great was the fall of it: so that it perished for ever and ever. Such must be the portion of all, who rest in any thing short of that religion which is above described. And the greater will their fall be, because they heard those sayings, and yet did them not.

II. 1. I am secondly, to shew the wisdom of him that doeth them, that buildeth his house upon a rock. He indeed is wise who doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. He is truly wise whose righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees. He is poor in spirit; knowing himself even also as he is known. He sees and feels all his sin, and all his guilt, till it is washed away by the atoning blood. He is conscious of his lost estate, of the wrath of God abiding on him, and of his utter inability to help himself, till he is filled with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. He is meek and gentle, patient toward all men, never returning evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing, till he overcomes evil with good. His soul is athirst for nothing on earth, but only for God, the living God. He has bowels of love for all mankind, and is ready to lay down his life for his enemies. He loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and all his mind and soul and strength. He alone shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, who in this spirit doeth good unto all men; and who being for this cause despised and rejected of men; being hated, reproached and persecuted, rejoices and is exceeding glad, knowing in whom he hath believed; and being assured, these light, momentary afflictions will work out for him an eternal weight of glory.

2. How truly wise is this man! He knows himself: an everlasting spirit, which came forth from God, and was sent down into an house of clay, not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him. He knows the world; the place in which he is to pass a few days or years, not as an inhabitant, but a stranger and sojourner, in his way to the everlasting habitations: and accordingly he uses the world, as not abusing it, and as knowing the fashion of it passes away.

He knows God his Father and his Friend, the parent of all good, the center of the spirits of all flesh, the sole happiness of all intelligent beings. He sees, clearer than the light of the noon-day sun, that this is the end of man, To glorify him who made him for himself, and to love and enjoy him for ever. And with equal clearness he sees the means to that end, to the employments of God, in glory, even now to know, to love to imitate God, and to believe in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.

3. He is a wise man, even in God's account; for he buildeth his house upon a rock: upon the rock of ages, the everlasting rock, the Lord Jesus Christ. Fidelity is he so called; for he changeth not. He is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. To him both the name of God of old and the apostle citing his words bear witness, "Thou, Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest; they all shall wax old as doth a garment. And as a vesture shall thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same and thy years shall not fail." Heb. i. 10, 11, 12. Wise therefore is the man who buildeth on him; who layeth him for his only foundation; who builds only upon his blood and righteousness, upon what he hath done and suffered for us. On this corner-stone he fixes his faith, and rests the whole weight of his soul upon it. He is taught of God to say, Lord, I have sinned: I deserve the nethermost hell. But I am "justified freely by thy grace, thro' the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. And the life I now live by faith in him, who loved me and gave him self for me. The life I now live:" namely, a divine heavenly life; a life which is "hid with Christ in God. I now live even in the flesh, a life of love, of pure love both to God and man: a life of holiness and happiness, praising God and doing all things to his glory.

4. Yet let not such an one think, That he shall not see war any more, that he is now out of the reach of temptation. It still remains for God to prove the grace he hath given: he shall be tried as gold in the fire. He shall be tempted not less, than they who know not God; perhaps abundantly more. For Satan will not fail to try to the uttermost, those whom he is not able to destroy. Accordingly, the rain will impetuously descend: only at such times



and in such a manner, as seems good, not to the prince of the power of the air, but to him whose kingdom ruleth over all. The floods, or torrents, will come; they will lift up their waves and rage horribly. But to them also, the Lord that sitteth above the water floods, that remaineth a King for ever, will say, Hitherto shall ye come and no farther: here shall your proud waves be stayed. The winds will blow and beat upon that house, as though they would tear it up from the foundation. But they cannot prevail: it faileth not: for it is founded upon a rock. He buildeth on Christ by faith and love: therefore he shall not be cast down. He shall not fear, though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea. 'Tho' the waters thereof rage and swell, and the mountains shake at the tempests of the same: still he dwelleth under the defence of the Most High, and is safe under the shadow of the Almighty.

III. 1. How nearly then does it concern every child of man, practically to apply these things to himself? Diligently to examine, on what foundation he builds, whether on a rock or on the sand? How deeply are you concerned to inquire, what is the foundation of my hope? Whereon do I build my expectation of entering into the kingdom of heaven? Is it not built on the sand? Upon my orthodoxy or right opinions, (which, by a gross abuse of words I have called faith!) Upon my having a set of notions (suppose more rational or scriptural than others have.) Alas! what madness is this? Surely this is building on the sand: or either on the froth of the sea! Say, I am convinced of this. Am I not again building my hope on what is equally unable to support it? Perhaps on my belonging to "so excellent a church: reformed after the true scripture model: blest with the purest doctrine, the most primitive liturgy, the most apostolical form of government." These are doubtless so many reasons for praising God, as they may be so many helps to holiness. But they are not holiness itself. And if they are separate from it, they will profit me nothing. Nay, they will leave me the more without excuse, and exposed to the great damnation. Therefore if I build my hope upon this foundation, I am still building upon the sand.

2. You cannot you dare not rest here. Upon what next will you build your hope of salvation? Upon your innocence? Upon your doing no harm? Your not wronging or hurting any one? Well, allow this plea to be true. You are just in all your dealings: you are a down-right honest man. You pay every man his own: you neither cheat nor extort: you act fairly with all mankind. And you have a conscience towards God: you do not live in any known sin. Thus far is well. But still it is not the thing. You may go thus far, and yet never come to heaven. When all this harmlessness flows from a right principle, it is the least part of the religion of Christ. But in you it does not flow from a right principle, and therefore is no part at all of religion. So that is grounding your hope of salvation on this, you are still building upon the sand.

3. Do you go farther yet? Do you add to the doing no harm, the attending all the ordinances of God? Do you at all opportunities partake of the Lord's supper? Use public and private prayer? Fast often? Hear and search the scriptures, and meditate thereon? These things likewise ought you to have done, from the time you first set your face towards heaven. Yet these things also are nothing, being alone. They are nothing without the weightier matters of the law. And those you have forgotten. At least you experience them not; faith mercy, and the love of God: holiness of heart: heaven opened in the soul. Still therefore you build upon the sand.

4. Over and above all this, are you zealous of good works? Do you, as you have time, do good to all men? Do you feed the hungry, and cloath the naked, and visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction? Do you visit those that are sick? Relieve them that are in prison? Is any a stranger, and you take him in? Friend, come up higher. Do you prophesy in the name of Christ? Do you preach the truth as it is in Jesus? And does the influence of his Spirit attend your word, and make it the power of God unto salvation? Does he enable you to bring sinners from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God? Then go and learn what thou hast so often taught, By grace ye are saved through faith. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but of his own mercy he saveth us. Learn to hang naked upon the cross of Christ,

counting all thou hast done but dung and dross. Apply to him just in the spirit of the dying thief, of the harlot with her seven devils. Else thou art still on the sand, and after saving others, thou wilt lose thy own soul.

5. Lord! increase my faith, if I now believe! else, give me faith, though but as a grain of mustard-seed! But what doth it profit, if a man says he hath faith, and hath not works? Can that faith save him? O, no! that faith which hath not works, which doth not produce both inward and outward holiness, which does not stamp the whole image of God on the heart, and purify us as he is pure: that faith which does not produce the whole of the religion described in the foregoing chapters, is not the faith of the gospel, not the christian faith, not the faith which leads to glory. O, beware of this, above all other snares of the devil, of resting on unholy, unsaving faith! if thou layest stress on this, thou art lost for ever: thou still buildest thy house upon the sand. When the rain descends, and the floods come, it will surely fall, and great will be the fall of it.

6. Now, therefore, build thou upon a rock. By the grace of God, know thyself. Know and feel, that thou wast shapen in wickedness, and that in sin did thy mother conceive thee: and yet thou thyself hast been heaping sin upon sin, ever since thou couldst discern good from evil. Own thyself guilty of eternal death: and renounce all hope of ever being able to save thyself. Be it all thy hope, to be washed in his blood, and purified by his spirit, who himself bore all thy sins, in his own body upon the tree. And if thou knowest he hath taken away thy sins, so much the more abase thyself before him, in a continued sense of thy total dependance on him for every good thought and word and work, and of thy utter inability to all good, unless he water thee every moment.

7. Now weep for your sins, and mourn after God till he turns your heaviness into joy. And even then weep with them that weep: and for them that weep not for themselves. Mourn for the sins and miseries of mankind: and see, but just before your eyes, the immense ocean of eternity, without a bottom or a shore; which has already swallowed up millions of millions of men, and is gaping to devour them that remain. See here the house of God, eternal in the heavens; there, hell and destruction without a covering. And

thence learn the importance of every moment, which just appears, and is gone for ever!

8. Now add to your seriousness, meekness of wisdom. Hold an even scale as to all your passions, but in particular, as to anger, sorrow and fear. Calmly acquiesce in whatsoever is the will of God. Learn in every state wherein you are, therewith to be content. Be mild to the good: be gentle toward all men: but especially toward the evil and unthankful. Beware not only of outward expressions of anger, such as calling thy brother *raca*, or thou fool! but of every inward emotion contrary to love, though it go no farther than the heart. Be angry at sin, as an affront offered to the majesty of heaven; but love the same still: like our Lord, who looked round about upon the pharisees with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts. He was grieved at the sinners, angry at the sin. Thus be thou angry and sin not.

9. Now do thou hunger and thirst, not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life. Trample under foot the world and the things of the world; all these riches, honors, pleasures. What is the world to thee? Let the dead bury the dead: but follow thou after the image of God. And beware of quenching that blessed thirst, if it is already excited in thy soul, by what is vulgarly called religion, a poor, dull farce, a religion of form, of outside show, which leaves the heart still cleaving to the dust, as earthly and sensual as ever. Let nothing satisfy thee but the power of Godliness, but a religion that is spirit and life: and dwelling in God, and God in thee; the being an inhabitant of eternity: the entering in by the blood of sprinkling within the veil, and sitting in heavenly places with Christ Jesus.

10. Now, seeing thou canst do all things through Christ strengthening thee, be merciful, as thy father in heaven is merciful. Love thy neighbor as thyself. Love friends and enemies as thy own soul. And let thy love be long-suffering, and patient towards all men. Let it be kind, soft, benign: inspiring thee with the most amiable sweetness, and the most fervent and tender affection. Let it rejoice in the truth, wheresoever it is found, the truth that is after godliness. Enjoy whatsoever brings glory to God, and promotes peace and good-will among men. In love cover all

things; of the dead and the absent speaking nothing but good: believe all things, which may any way tend to clear your neighbor's character hope all things, in his favor, and endure all things, triumphing over all opposition. For true love never faileth, in time or in eternity.

11. Now, be thou pure in heart; purified through faith from every unholy affection, cleansing thyself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Being through the power of his grace, purified from pride by deep poverty of spirit, from anger, from every unkind or turbulent passion, by meekness and mercifulness, from every desire but to please and enjoy God, by hungering and thirsting after righteousness; now love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy strength.

12. In a word. Let thy religion be the religion of the heart. Let it lie deep in thy inmost soul. Be thou little and base, and mean and vile, (beyond what words can express) in thine own eyes: amazed and humbled to the dust, by the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Be serious. Let the whole stream of thy thoughts, words, and actions flow from the deepest conviction, that thou standest on the edge of the great gulf, thou and all the children of men, just ready to drop in, either into everlasting glory, or everlasting burnings. Let thy soul be filled with mildness, gentleness, patience, long-suffering towards all men: at the same time that all which is in thee is athirst for God, the living God; longing to awake up after his likeness, and to be satisfied with it. Be thou a lover of God and of all mankind. In this spirit do and suffer all things. Thus shew thy faith by thy works: thus do the will of thy father which is in heaven. And as sure as thou now walkest with God on earth, thou shalt also reign with him in glory.

## SERMON XIV.

*A Caution against Bigotry.*

MARK, ix. 38, 39.

*And John answered him, saying, master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbid him, because he followeth not us.*

*And Jesus said, forbid him not.*

1. **I**N the preceding verses we read, that after the twelve had been disputing, which of them should be the greatest, Jesus took a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, said unto them, whosoever shall receive one of these little children in my name receiveth me: and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth not me (only) but him that sent me. Then John answered (that is. said with reference to what our Lord had spoken just before) master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbid him, because he followeth not us. As if he had said, “ought we to have received him? In receiving him should we have received thee? Ought we not rather to have forbidden him? Did we not do well therein? But Jesus said, forbid him not.

2. The same passage is recited by St. Luke, and almost in the same words. But it may be asked, what is this to us? Seeing no man now casts out devils. Has not the power of doing this been withdrawn from the church, for twelve or fourteen hundred years? How then are we concerned in the case here proposed, or in the Lord's decision of it?

3. Perhaps more nearly than is commonly imagined, the case proposed being no uncommon case. That we may reap our full advantage from it I design to shew, first, in what sense men may and do now cast out devils: secondly, what we may understand by, he followeth not us. I shall, thirdly, explain our Lord's direction, forbid him not, and conclude with an inference from the whole.

I. 1. I am, in the first place to shew, in what sense men may, and do not cast out devils.

In order to have the earliest view of this, we should remember that (according to the scriptural account) as God dwells and works in the children of light, so the devil dwells and works in the children of darkness. As the holy spirit possesses the souls of good men, so the evil spirit possesses the souls of the wicked. Hence it is that the apostle terms him, the God of this world: from the uncontrolled power he has over world'y men. Hence our blessed Lord styles him the prince of this world: so absolute is his dominion over it. And hence St. John, we know that we are of God, and who are not of God, the whole world, — . Not, lieth in wickedness: but lieth in the wicked one; lies and moves in him, as they who are not of the world, do in God.

2. For the devil is not to be considered only as a roaring lion, going about seeking whom he may devour: nor barely a subtle enemy, who cometh unawares upon poor souls, and leads them captive at his will: but as he who dwelleth in them and walketh in them; who ruleth the darkness or wickedness of this world, of worldly men and all their dark designs and actions, by keeping possession of their hearts, setting up his throne there, and bringing every thought into obedience to himself. Thus the strong one armed keepeth his house: and if this unclean spirit sometimes go out of a man, yet he often returns with seven spirits worse than himself, and they enter in and dwell there. Nor can he be idle in his dwelling. He is continually working in these children of disobedience. He works in them with power, with mighty energy, transforming them into his own likeness, effacing all the remains of the image of God, and preparing them for every evil word and work.

3. It is therefore an unquestionable truth, that the God and prince of this world, still possesses all who know not God. Only the matter wherein he possesses them now, differs from that wherein he did it of old time. Then he frequently tormented their bodies, as well as souls, and that openly, without any disguise. Now he torments their souls only, (unless in some rare cases) and that as covertly as possible. The reason of this difference is plain. It was then his aim to drive mankind into superstition. Therefore he wrought as openly as he could. But it is his aim to drive us into infidelity. Therefore he works as privately as he can; for the more secret he is, the more he prevails.

4. Yet, if we may credit historians, there are countries even now, where he works openly as aforesaid. "But why in savage and barbarous countries only? Why not in Italy, France or England?" For a very plain reason: he knows his men. And he knows what he hath to do with each. To laplanders, he appears barefaced: because he is to fix them in superstition and gross idolatry. But with you he is pursuing a different point. He is to make you idolize yourselves: to make you wiser in your own eyes than God himself, than all the oracles of God. Now in order to this, he must not appear in his own shape: that would frustrate his design. No: he uses all his art, to make you deny his being, till he has you safe in his own place.

5. He reigns therefore, altho' in a different way, yet as absolute in one land as in the other. He has the gay Italian infidel in his teeth, as sure as the wild Tartar. But he is fast asleep in the mouth of the lion, who is too wise to awaken him out of sleep. So he only plays with him for the present, and when he pleases, swallows him up.

The God of this world holds his English worshippers full as fast as those in Lapland. But it is not his business to affright them, lest they should fly to the God of heaven. The prince of darkness therefore does not appear, while he rules over these his willing subjects. The conqueror holds his captives so much the safer, because they imagine themselves at liberty. Thus the strong one armed keepeth his house, and his goods are in peace: neither the deist nor nominal christian suspects he is there: so he and they are perfectly at peace with each other.

6. All this while he works with energy in them. He blinds the eyes of their understanding, so that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, cannot shine upon them. He chains their souls down to earth and hell, with the chains of their own vile affections. He binds them down to the earth by love of the world, love of money, of pleasure, of praise. And by pride, envy, anger, hate, revenge, he causes their souls to draw nigh unto hell: acting the more secure and uncontroled, because they know not that he acts at all.

7. But how easily may we know the cause from its effects? These are sometimes gross and palpable. So they were in the most refined of the heathen nations. Go no farther than the admired, the virtuous Romans. And you



will find these, when at the height of their learning and glory, "filled with all unrighteousness; fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity: whisperers, backbiters, despicable, proud boaster, disobedient to parents: covenant breakers, without natural affection: implicable, unmerciful."

8. The strongest parts of this description are confirmed by one, whom some may think a more unexceptionable witness. I mean, their brother heathen, Dion Cassius: who observes, that before Cæsar's return from Gaul, not only gluttony and lewdness of every kind, were open and barefaced; not only falshood, injustice, and unmercifulness abounded, in public courts as well as private families: but the most outrageous robberies, rapine and murders, were so frequent in all parts of Rome, that few men went out of doors without making their wills, as not knowing if they should return alive.

9. As gross and palpable are the works of the devil, among many (if not all) the modern heathens. The natural religion of the Creeks, Cheerokees, Chicasaws, and all other Indians, bordering on our southern settlements (not of a few single men, but of entire nations) is, to torture all their prisoners from morning to night, till at length they roast them to death: and upon the slightest, undesigned provocation, to come behind and shoot any one of their own countrymen. Yea, it is a common thing among them, for the son, if he thinks his father lives too long, to knock out his brains: and for a mother, if she is tired of her children, to fasten stones about their necks, and throw three or four of them into the river, one after another.

10. It were to be wished that none but heathens had practised such gross, palpable works of the devil. But we dare not say so. Even in cruelty and bloodshed, how little have the christians come behind them? And not the Spaniards or Portugues alone, butchering thousands in South America. Not the Dutch only in the East-Indies, or the French in North-America, following the Spaniards step by step. Our own countrymen too have wanted in blood, and exterminated whole nations: plainly proving thereby, what spirit it is, that dwells and works in the children of disobedience.

11. These monsters might almost make us overlook the works of the devil that are wrought in our own country.— But alas! We cannot open our eyes even here, without seeing them on every side. Is it a small proof of his power, that common swearers, drunkards, whoremongers, adulterers, thieves, robbers, sodomites, murderers, are still found in every part of our land? How triumphant does the prince of this world reign, in all these children of disobedience?

12. He less openly, but no less effectually works in dissemblers, talebearers, liars, slanderers, : in oppressors and extortioners; in the perjured, the seller of his friend, his honor, his conscience, his country. And yet these may talk of religion or conscience still! Of honor, virtue and public spirit. But they can no more deceive Satan than they can God. He likewise knows those that are his: and a great multitude they are out of every nation and people, of whom he has full possession at this day.

13. If you consider this, you cannot but see in what sense, men may now also cast out devils: yea, and every minister of Christ does cast them out, if his Lord's work prosper in his hand.

By the power of God attending his word, he brings these sinners to repentance: an entire inward as well as outward change, from all evil to all good. And this is, in a sound sense, to cast out devils, out of the souls wherein they had hitherto dwelt. The strong one can no longer keep his house. A stronger than he is come upon him, and hath cast him out, and taken possession for himself, and made it a habitation of God through his spirit. Here then the energy of Satan ends, and the Son of God destroys the works of the devil. The understanding of the sinner is now enlightened, and his heart sweetly drawn to God.— His desires are refined, his affections purified: and being filled with the Holy Ghost, he grows in grace till he is not only holy in heart, but in all manner of conversation.

14. All this is indeed the work of God. It is God alone who can cast out Satan. But he is generally pleased to do this by man, as an instrument in his hand: who is then said, to cast out devils in his name, by his power and authority. And he sends whom he will send upon this great work: but usually such as man would never have thought of. For his ways are not as our ways, neither his thoughts.

as our thoughts. Accordingly he chuses the weak to confound the mighty, the foolish to confound the wise; for this plain reason, that he may secure the glory to himself: that no flesh may glory in his sight.

II. 1. But shall we not forbid one who thus casteth out devils, if he followeth not us? This it seems was both the judgment and practice of the apostle, till he referred the case to his Master. We forbid him, saith he, because he followeth not us, which he supposed to be a very sufficient reason. What we may understand by this expression, He followeth not us, is the next point to be considered.

The lowest circumstance we can understand thereby is, he has no outward connexion with us. We do not labour in conjunction with each other. He is not our-fellow helper in the gospel. And indeed whensoever our Lord is pleased, to send many labourers in his harvest, they cannot all act, in subordination to, or connexion with each other.— Nay, they cannot all have personal acquaintance with, nor be so much as known to one another. Many there will necessarily be in different parts of the harvest, so far from having any mutual intercourse, that they will be as absolute strangers to each other, as if they had lived in different ages. And concerning any of these whom we know not, we may doubtless say, He followeth not us.

2. A second meaning of this expression may be, he is not of our party. It has long been matter of melancholy consideration, to all who pray for the peace of Jerusalem, that so many several parties are still subsisting, among those who are stiled Christians. This has been particularly observable in our own countrymen, who have been continually dividing from each other, upon points of no moment, and many times such as religion had no concern in. The most trifling circumstances have given rise to different parties, which have continued for many generations. And each of these would be ready to object, to one who was on the other side, He followeth not us.

3. That expression may mean, thirdly. he differs from us in our religious opinions. There was a time when all Christians were of one mind, as well as of one heart. So great grace was upon them all, when they were first filled with the Holy Ghost. But how short a space did this blessing continue? How soon was that unanimity lost, and

difference of opinion sprang up again, even in the church of Christ? And that not in nominal, but in real Christians: nay in the very chief of them, the apostles themselves? Nor does it appear that the difference which then began, was ever entirely removed. We do not find, that even those pillars in the temple of God, so long as they remained upon earth, were ever brought to think alike, to be of one mind, particularly with regard to the ceremonial law. It is therefore no way surprising, that infinite varieties of opinion should now be found in the christian church. A very probable consequence of this is, that whenever we see any casting out devils, he will be one that in this sense, he followeth not us: that is not of our opinion. It is scarce to be imagined he will be of our mind, in all points even of religion. He may very probably think in a different manner from us, even on several subjects of importance: such as, the nature and use of the moral law, the eternal decrees of God, the sufficiency and efficacy of his grace, and the perseverance of his children.

4. He may differ from us, fourthly, not only in opinion but likewise in some points of practice. He may not approve of that manner of worshipping God, which is practised in our congregation: and may judge that to be more profitable for his soul, which took its rise from Calvin, or Martin Luther. He may have many objections to that liturgy, which we approve of beyond all others; many doubts concerning that form of Church government, which we esteem both apostolical and scriptural. Perhaps he may go farther from us yet: he may from a principle of conscience refrain from several of those, which we believe to be the ordinances of Christ. Or if we both agree, that they are ordained of God, there may still remain a difference between us, either as to the manner of administering those ordinances, or the persons to whom they should be administered. Now the unavoidable consequence of any of these differences, will be, that he who thus differs from us, must separate himself with regard to those points, from our society. In this respect therefore he followeth not us: he is not (as we phrase it) of our church.

5. But in a far stronger sense, he followeth not us who, is not only of a different church, but of such a church as we account to be in many respects antisciptural and antichristian

a church which we believe to be utterly false and erroneous in her doctrines, as well as very dangerously wrong in her practice, guilty of gross superstition as well as idolatry. A church that has added many articles to the faith, which was once delivered to the saints : that has dropt one whole commandment of God, and made void several of the rest by her traditions : and that pretending the higher veneration for and strictest conformity to the ancient church has nevertheless brought in numberless innovations, without any warrant either from antiquity or scripture. Now most certainly he followeth not us, who stands at so great a distance from us.

6. And yet there may be still a wider difference than this. He who differs from us in judgment or practice, may possibly stand at a greater distance from us, in affection than in judgment. And this indeed is a very natural and a very common effect of the other. The differences which begin in points of opinion, seldom terminate there. They generally spread into the affections, and then separate chief friends. Nor are any animosities so deep and irreconcilable, as those that spring from disagreement in religion.— For this cause the bitterest enemies of a man, are those of his own household. For this the father rises against his own children, and the children against the father : and perhaps persecute each other even to the death, thinking all the time they are doing God service. It is therefore nothing more than we may expect, if those who differ from us either in religious opinions or practice, soon contract a sharpness, yea a bitterness toward us ; if they are more and more prejudiced against us, till they conceive as ill an opinion of our persons as of our principles. An almost necessary consequence of this will be, they will speak in the same manner as they think of us. They will set themselves in opposition to us, and as far as they are able hinder our work : seeing it does not appear to them to be the work of God, but either of man or of the devil. He that thinks speaks, and acts in such a manner as this, in the highest sense, followeth not us.

7. I do not indeed conceive, That the person of whom the apostle speaks in the text (although we have no particular account of him, either in the context, or in any other part of holy writ) went so far as this. We have no ground

to suppose. That there was any material difference between him and the apostles; much less that he had any prejudice either against them or their Master. It seems we may gather thus much from our Lord's own words which immediately follow the text, "There is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me." But I purposely put the case in the strongest light, adding all the circumstances which can well be conceived: that being forewarned of the temptation in its full strength, we may in no case yield to it, and fight against God.

III. 1. Suppose then a man have no intercourse with us, suppose he be not of our party, suppose he separate from our church, yea, and widely differ from us, both in judgment, practice and affection: yet if we see even this man casting out devils, Jesus saith, Forbid him not. This important direction of our Lord, I am, in the the third place, to explain.

2. If we see this man casting out devils — But it is well if, in such a case, we would believe even what we saw with our eyes, if we did not give the lie to our own senses. He must be little acquainted with human nature, who does not immediately perceive, how extremely unready we should be to believe that any man does cast out devils, who followeth not us, in all, or most of the senses above recited. I had almost said, in any of them: seeing we may easily learn, even from what passes in our own breasts, how unwilling men are, to allow any thing good in those, who do not in all things agree with themselves.

3. But what is a sufficient, reasonable proof that a man does (in the sense above) cast out devils?" The answer is easy. Is there full proof, 1. That a person before us was a gross open sinner? Secondly, that he is not so now; that he has broke off his sins, and lives a Christian life? And, thirdly, That his change was wrought by hearing this man preach? If these three points be plain and undeniable, then you have sufficient, reasonable proof, such as you cannot resist without willful sin, That this man casts out devils.

4. Then forbid him not. Beware how you attempt to hinder him, either by your authority, or arguments, or persuasions. Do not in any wise strive to prevent his using all the power which God has given him. If you have au-

authority with him. do not use that authority, to stop the work of God. Do not furnish him with reasons, why he ought not any more to speak in the name of Jesus. Satan will not fail to supply him with these, if you do not second him therein. Persuade him not to depart from the work. If he should give place to the devil and you, many souls might perish in their iniquity, but their blood would God require at your hands.

5. "But what if he be only a Layman who casts out devils? Ought I not to forbid him then?"

Is the fact allowed? Is there reasonable proof, That this man has or does cast out devils? If there is, forbid him not: no, not at the peril of your soul. Shall not God work by whom he will work? No man can do these works unless God is with him, unless God hath sent him for this very thing. But if God hath sent him, will you call him back? Will you forbid him to go?

6. "But I do not know, that he is sent of God." Now herein is a marvelous thing (may any of the seals of his mission say, any whom he hath brought from satan to God) "that ye know not whence this man is, and behold he hath opened mine eyes! If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." If you doubt the fact, send for the parents of the man: and for his brethren, friends, acquaintance. But if you cannot doubt this, if you must needs acknowledge, that a notable miracle hath been wrought, then with what conscience, with what face can you charge him whom God hath sent, not to speak any more in his name?

7. I allow, that it is highly expedient, whoever preaches in his name, should have an outward as well as an inward call. But that it is absolutely necessary I deny.

"Nay, is not the scripture express? No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron?" Heb. v. 4.

Numberless times has this text been quoted on the occasion, as containing the very strength of the cause. But surely never was so unhappy a quotation. For, first, Aaron was not called to preach at all. He was called to offer gifts and sacrifice for sin. That was his peculiar employment. Secondly, these men do not offer sacrifice to all: but only preach, which Aaron did not. Therefore it is not possible

to find one text in all the Bible, which is more wide of the point than this.

8. "But what was the practice of the apostolic age?" You may easily see in the Acts of the apostles. In the eighth chapter we read, "there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem: and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles, ver. 1. Therefore they that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word," ver. 4. Now were all these outwardly called to preach? No man in his senses can think so. Here then is an undeniable proof, what was the practice of the apostolic age. Here you see not one, but a multitude of lay-preachers, men that were only sent of God.

9. Indeed so far is the practice of the apostolic age from inclining us to think it was unlawful for a man to preach before he was ordained, that we have reason to think, it was not then accounted necessary. Certainly the practice and the direction of the apostle Paul, was, to prove a man before he was ordained at all. Let these, (the deacons) says he, first be proved: then let them use the office of a deacon — 1 Tim. iii. 10. Proved? how? By setting them to construe a sentence of Greek? And asking them a few common place questions? O amazing proof of a minister of Christ! Nay: but by making a clear, open trial (as is still done by most of the protestant churches in Europe) not only whether their lives be holy and unblameable, but whether they have such gifts as are absolutely and indispensably necessary, in order to edify the church of Christ.

10. "But what if a man has these? And has brought sinners to repentance? And yet the bishop will not ordain him?" Then the bishop does forbid him to cast out devils. But I dare not forbid him. I have published my reasons to all the world. Yet it is still insisted, I ought to do it. You who insist on it, answer those reasons. I know not that any have done this yet, or even made an attempt of doing it. Only some have spoken of them as very weak and trifling. And this was prudent enough. For it is far easier to despise, at least, seem to despise an argument than to answer it. Yet till this is done I must say, when I have reasonable proof that any man does cast out devils, whatever



others do, I dare not forbid him, lest I be found even to fight against God.

11. And whosoever thou art that fearest God, forbid him not, either directly or indirectly. There are many ways of doing this. You indirectly forbid him, if you either wholly deny, or despise and make little account of the work which God has wrought by his hands. You indirectly forbid him, when you discourage him in his work, by drawing him into disputes concerning it, by raising objections against it, or frightening him with consequences, which very possibly will never be. You forbid him, when you shew any unkindness toward him, either in language or behaviour: and much more, when you speak of him to others, either in an unkind or contemptuous manner: when you endeavor to represent him to any, either in an odious or a despicable light. You are forbidding him all the time you are speaking evil of him, or making no account of his labors. O forbid him not in any of these ways: nor by forbidding others to hear him, by discouraging sinners from hearing that word, which is able to save their souls.

12. Yea, if you would observe our Lord's direction in its full meaning and extent, then remember this word, he that is not for us, is against us; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth. He that gathereth not men into the kingdom of God, assuredly scatters them from it. For there can be no neuter in this war. Every one is either on God's side or on satan's. Are you on God's side? Then you will not only forbid any man that casts out devils, but you will labor to the uttermost of your power to forward him in the work. You will readily acknowledge the work of God and confess the greatness of it. You will remove all difficulties and objections, as far as may be, out of his way. You will strengthen his hands by speaking honorably of him before all men, and avowing the things which you have seen and heard. You will encourage others to attend upon his word, to hear him whom God hath sent. And you will omit no actual proof of tender love, which God gives you an opportunity of shewing him.

IV. 1. If we willingly fail in any of these points, if we either directly or indirectly forbid him, because he followeth not us, then we are bigots. This is the inference I draw from what has been said. But the term bigotry I fear, as fre-

quently as it is used, is almost as little understood as enthusiasm. It is, too strong an attachment to, or fondness for our own party, opinion, church and religion. Therefore he is a bigot, who is so fond of any of these, so strongly attached to them, as to forbid any who cast out devils, because he differs from himself, in any, or all these particulars.

2. Do you beware of this. Take care, first, that you do not convict yourself of bigotry, by your unreadiness to believe, that any man does cast out devils, who differs from you. And if you are clear thus far, if you acknowledge the fact, then examine yourself, secondly, am I not convicted of bigotry in this, in forbidding him directly or indirectly? Do I not directly forbid him on this ground, because he is not of my party? Because he does not fall in with my opinions? Or because he does not worship God according to that scheme of religion, which I have received from my fathers.

3. Examine yourself; do I not indirectly at least forbid him, on any of these grounds? Am I not sorry, that God should thus own and bless a man that holds such erroneous opinions? Do I not discourage him, because he is not of my church? By disputing with him concerning it, by raising objections, and by perplexing his mind with distant consequences? Do I shew no anger, contempt, or unkindness of any sort, either in my words or actions? Do I not mention behind his back, his real or supposed faults? His defects or infirmities? Do not I hinder sinners from hearing his words? If you do any of these things, you are a bigot to this day.

4. Search me, O Lord and prove me. Try out my reins and my heart! Look well if there be any of bigotry in me, and lead me in the way of everlasting. In order to examine ourselves thoroughly, let the case be proposed in the strongest manner. What if I were to see a papist, an arian, a socinian casting out devils? If I did, I could not forbid even him, without convicting myself of bigotry. Yea, if it could be supposed, that I should see a Jew, or a Deist, or a Turk doing the same, were I to forbid him either directly or indirectly, I should be no better than a bigot still.

5. O stand clear of this. But be not content with not forbidding any that casts out devils. It is well, to go thus far;

but do not stop here. If you will avoid all bigotry, go on. In every instance of this kind, whatever the instrument be, acknowledge the finger of God. And not only acknowledge but rejoice in his work and praise his name with thanksgiving. Encourage whomsoever God is pleased to employ, to give himself wholly up thereto. Speak well of him wheresoever you are: defend his character and his mission. Enlarge as far as you can his sphere of action. Shew him all kindness in word and deed. And cease not to cry to God in his behalf, that he may save both himself and them that hear him.

6. I need add but one caution. Think not, the bigotry of another is any excuse for your own. It is not impossible, that one who casts out devils himself, may yet forbid you so to do. You may observe, this is the very case mentioned in the text. The apostles forbade another to do what they did themselves. But beware of torturing. It is not your part, to return evil for evil. Another's not observing the direction of our Lord is no reason why you should neglect it. Nay, but let him have all the bigotry to himself. If he forbids you, do you not forbid him. Rather labor and watch and pray the more, to confirm your love toward him. If he speaks all manner of evil of you, speak all manner of good (that is true) of him. Imitate therein that glorious saying of a great man. (O that he had always breathed the same spirit!) "Let Luther call me an hundred devils: I will still reverence him as a messenger of God."

## SERMON XV.

*The Nature of Enthusiasm.*

ACTS xxvi. 24.

*And Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself.*

1. **A**ND so say all the world, the men who know not God, of all that are of Paul's religion; of every one who is so a follower of him, as he was of Christ. It is true, there is a sort of religion, nay and it is called Christianity too, which may be practised without any such imputation, which is generally allowed to be consistent with common sense. That is, a religion of form, a round of outward duties, performed in a decent regular manner. You may add orthodoxy thereto, a system of right opinions, yea and some quantity of Heathen morality. And yet not many will pronounce, that much religion hath made you mad. But if you aim at the religion of the heart, if you talk of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, then it will not be long before your sentence is past, Thou art beside thyself.

2. And it is no compliment which the men of the world pay you herein. They for once, mean what they say.— They not only affirm, but cordially believe, that every man is beside himself, who says the love of God is shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto him, and that God has enabled him to rejoice in Christ, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. If a man is indeed alive to God, and dead to all things here below: if he continually sees him that is invisible, and accordingly walks by faith and not by sight: then they account it a clear case: beyond all dispute, much religion hath made him mad.

3. It is easy to observe, that the determinate thing which the world accounts madness, is that utter contempt of all temporal things, and steady pursuit of things eternal; that divine conviction of things not seen; that rejoicing in the favor of God; that happy, holy love of God; and the testimony of his Spirit with our spirit, that we are the chil-

dren of God. That is, in truth, the whole spirit in life and power of the religion of Jesus Christ.

4. They will however allow, in other respects, the man acts and talks like one in his senses. In other things, he is a reasonable man: it is in these instances only his head is touched. It is therefore acknowledged, that the madness under which he labours, is of a particular kind. And accordingly they are accustomed to distinguish it by a particular name, Enthusiasm.

5. A term this, which is exceeding frequently used, which is scarce ever out of some men's mouths. And yet it is exceeding rarely understood, even by those who use it most. It may be therefore not unacceptable to serious men, to all who desire to understand what they speak or hear, if I endeavour to explain the meaning of this term, to shew what Enthusiasm is. It may be an encouragement to those who are unjustly charged therewith: and may possibly be of use, to some who are justly charged with it, at least to others, who might be so, were they not cautioned against it.

6. As to the word itself, it is generally allowed to be of Greek extraction. But whence the Greek word *evthoesianox*, is derived, none has yet been able to shew. Some have endeavoured to derive it from *en Oeo* in God, because all Enthusiasm has reference to him. But this is quite forced; there being small resemblance from the word derived, and those they strive to derive it from. Others would derive it from *en thsia*, in sacrifice, because many Enthusiasts of old, were affected in the most violent manner during the time of sacrifice. Perhaps it is a fictitious word, invented from the noise, which some of those made who were so affected.

7. It is not improbable, that one reason why this uncouth word has been retained in so many languages, was because men were no better agreed, concerning the meaning, than concerning the derivation of it. They therefore adopted the Greek word, because they did not understand it: they did not translate it into their own tongues, because they knew not how to translate it: it having been a word of a loose uncertain sense, to which no determinate meaning was affixed.

8. It is not therefore at all surprising, that it is so variously taken at this day : different persons understanding it in different sense, quite inconsistent with each other. — Some take it in a good sense, for a divine impulse or impression, superior to all the natural faculties, and suspending for the time, either in whole or in part, both the reason and the outward senses. In this meaning of the word, both the prophets of old, and the apostles were proper Enthusiasts : being at divers times so filled with the Spirit, and so influenced by him who dwelt in their hearts, that the exercise of their own reason, their own senses, and all their natural faculties being suspended, they were wholly actuated by the power of God, and, spoke only as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

9. Others take the word in an indifferent sense, such as neither morally good nor evil. Thus they speak of the Enthusiasm of the poets : of *Homer* and *Virgil* in particular. And this a late eminent writer extends so far as to assert, there is no man excellent in this profession, whatsoever it be, who has not in his temper a strong tincture of Enthusiasm. By Enthusiasm these appear to understand, an uncommon vigour of thought, a peculiar fervor of spirit, a vivacity and strength not to be found in common men : elevating the soul to greater and higher things, than cool reason could have attained.

10. But neither of these in the sense wherein the word Enthusiasm is most usually understood. The generality of men, if no farther agreed, at least agree thus far concerning it, that it is something evil : and this is plainly the sentiment of all those, who call the religion of the heart Enthusiasm. Accordingly I shall take it in the following pages as an evil ; a misfortune, if not a fault.

11. As to the nature of Enthusiasm, it is undoubtedly a disorder of the mind ; and such a disorder, as greatly hinders the exercise of reason. Nay sometimes, it wholly sets it aside : it not only dims, but shuts the eyes of the understanding. It may therefore well be accounted a species of madness ; of madness rather than folly: seeing a fool is properly one who draws wrong conclusions from right premises : whereas a madman draws right conclusions, but from wrong premises. And so does an Enthusiast. Suppose his premises true, and his conclusions would necessarily follow.

But here lies his mistake, his premises are false. He imagines himself to be what he is not. And therefore setting out wrong, the farther he goes the more he wanders out of the way.

12. Every enthusiast then is properly a madman. Yet his is not an ordinary, but a religious madness. By religious, I do not mean, that it is any part of religion. Quite the reverse: religion is, the spirit of a sound mind: and consequently stands in direct opposition to madness of every kind. But I mean, it has religion for its object; it is conversant about religion. And so the enthusiast is generally talking of religion, of God or the things of God: but talking in such a manner that every reasonable christian may discern the disorder of his mind. Enthusiasm in general may then be described in some such manner as this: a religious madness arising from some falsely imagined influence or inspiration of God: at least, from imputing something to God which ought not to be imputed to him, or expecting something from God which ought not to be expected from him.

14. There are innumerable sorts of enthusiasm. Those which are most common, and for that reason most dangerous, I shall endeavour to reduce under a few general heads, that they may be more easily understood and avoided.

The first sort of enthusiasm which I shall mention, is that of those who imagine they have the grace which they have not. Thus some imagine, when it is not so, that they have redemption through Christ, even the forgiveness of sin. These are usually such as have no root in themselves — no deep repentance or thorough conviction. Therefore they receive the word with joy. And because they have no deepness of earth, no deep work in their heart, therefore the seed immediately springs up. There is immediately a superficial change, which together with that light joy striking in with the pride of their unbroken heart, and with their inordinate self love, easily persuades them, they have already tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.

14. This is properly an instance of the first sort of enthusiasm: it is a kind of madness, arising from the imagination, that they have that grace which in truth they have

not : so that they only deceive their own souls. Madness it may justly be termed : for the reasonings of these poor men are right, were their premises good : but as these are a mere creature of their own imagination, so all that is built on them falls to the ground. The foundation of all their reveries is this : they imagine themselves to have faith in Christ. If they had this, they would be kings and priests to God, possessors of a kingdom which cannot be moved. But they have it not. Consequently, all their following behaviour, is as wide of truth and soberness, as that of the ordinary madman, who fancying himself an earthly king, speaks and acts in that character.

15. There are many other enthusiasts of this sort. Such for instance, is the fiery zealot for religion ; or (more probably) for the opinions and modes of worship, which he dignifies with that name. This man also strongly imagines himself to be a believer in Jesus, yea, that he is a champion for the faith, which was once delivered to the saints. Accordingly all his conduct is formed, upon that vain imagination. And allowing his supposition to be just, he would have a tolerable plea for his behavior : whereas now it is evidently the effect of a distempered brain, as well as of a distempered heart.

16. But the most common of all the enthusiasts of this kind, are those who imagine themselves christians and are not. These abound not only in all parts of our land, but in the most parts of the habitable earth. That they are not christians is clear and undeniable, if we believe the oracles of God. For christians are holy ; these are unholy : christians love God, these love the world. Christians are humble ; these are proud ; christians are gentle ; these are passionate. Christians have the mind which was in Christ : these are the utmost distant from it. Consequently, they are no more christians than they are archangels. Yet they imagine themselves so to be ; and they can give several reasons for it. For they have been called so ever since they can remember : they were christened many years ago : they embrace the christian opinions, vulgarly termed, the christian or catholic faith. They use the christian modes of worship, as their fathers did before them. They live what is called a good christian life, as the rest of their neighbors do. And who shall presume to think or say,



that these men are not christians? . Though without one grain of true faith in Christ, or of real inward holiness! Without ever having tasted the love of God, or been made partakers of the Holy Ghost.

17. Ah, poor self deceivers! Christians ye are not. But you are enthusiasts in a high degree. Physicians heal yourselves. But first, know your disease: your whole life is enthusiasm: as being all suitable to the imagination, that you have received that grace of God which you have not. In consequence of this grand mistake, you blunder on, day by day, speaking and acting under a character, which does in no wise belong to you. Hence arises that palpable, glaring inconsistency, that runs through your whole behaviour: which is an awkward mixture of real heathenism and imaginary christianity. Yet still, as you have so vast a majority on your side, you will always carry it by mere dint of numbers. "That you are the only men in your senses, and all are lunatics who are not as you are." But this alters not the nature of things. In the sight of God and his holy angels, yea, and all the children of God upon earth, you are mere madmen, mere enthusiasts all. Are you not? Are you not walking in a vain shadow, a shadow of religion, a shadow of happiness? Are you not still disquieting yourselves in vain? With misfortunes as imaginary as your happiness or religion? Do you not fancy yourselves great or good? Very knowing, and very wise! How long? Perhaps till death brings you back to your senses; to bewail your folly for ever and ever!

18. A second sort of enthusiasm, is that of those, who imagine they have such gifts from God, as they have not. Thus some have imagined themselves to be endued with a power of working miracles, of healing the sick by a word or a touch, of restoring sight to the blind; yea, even of raising the dead, a notorious instance of which is still fresh in our own history. Others have undertaken to prophesy, to foretel things to come, and that with the utmost certainty and exactness. But a little time usually convinces these enthusiasts. When plain facts run counter to their predictions, experience performs what reason could not, and sinks them down into their senses.

19. To the same class belong those, who in preaching or prayer, imagine themselves to be so influenced by the spir-

it of God as, in fact, they are not. I am sensible indeed, that without him we can do nothing; more especially in our public ministry: that all our preaching is utterly vain, unless it be attended with his power; and all our prayer, unless his spirit therein help our infirmities. I know, if we do not both preach and pray by the spirit, it is all but lost labor: seeing the help that is done upon earth, he doth it himself, who worketh all in all. But this does not affect the case before us. Though there is a real influence of the spirit of God, there is also an imaginary one; and many there are who mistake the one for the other. Many suppose themselves to be under that influence, when they are not, when it is far from them. And many others suppose, they are more under that influence than they really are. Of this number, I fear, all are they who imagine, that God dictates the very words they speak: and that consequently, it is impossible they should speak any thing amiss, either as to the matter or manner of it. It is well known, how many enthusiasts of this sort also, have appeared during the present century: some of whom speak in a far more authoritative manner, than either St. Paul or any of the apostles.

20. The same sort of enthusiasm, though in a lower degree, is frequently found in men of a private character.— They may likewise imagine themselves to be influenced or directed by the spirit, when they are not. I allow, if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his: and that if ever we either think, speak, or act aright, it is through the assistance of that blessed spirit. But how many impute things to him, or expect things from him, without any rational or scriptural ground? Such are they who imagine, they either do or shall receive particular directions from God, not only in points of importance, but in things of no moment, in the most trifling circumstances of life. Whereas in these cases, God has given us our own reason for a guide; though never excluding the secret assistance of his spirit.

21. To this kind of Enthusiasm they are peculiarly exposed, who expect to be directed of God, either in spiritual things or in common life, in what is justly called an extraordinary manner. I mean by visions or dreams, by strong impressions or sudden impulses on the mind. I do not

deny, that God has of old times manifested his will in this manner. Or that he can do so now. Nay, I believe he does in some very rare instances. But how frequently do men mistake herein? How are they misled by pride and a warm imagination, to ascribe such impulses or impressions, dreams or visions to God, as are utterly unworthy of him? Now this is all pure Enthusiasm, all as wide of religion, as it is of truth and soberness.

22. Perhaps some may' ask, "Ought we not then to enquire, What is the will of God in all things? And ought not his will be the rule of his practice?" Unquestionably it ought. But how is a sober Christian to make this enquiry? To know what is the will of God? Not by waiting for supernatural dreams. Not by expecting God to reveal it in visions. Not by looking for any particular impressions, or sudden impulses on his mind. No, but by consulting the oracles of God. To the law and to the testimony. This is the general method of knowing what is the holy and acceptable will of God.

23. "But how shall I know what is the will of God, in such and such a particular case? The thing proposed is in itself of an indifferent nature, and so left undetermined in scripture." I answer, The scripture itself gives you a general rule, applicable to all particular cases. The will of God is our sanctification. It is his will that we should be inwardly and outwardly holy: that we should be good and do good in every kind, and in the highest degree whereof we are capable. Thus far we tread upon firm ground.—This is as clear as the shining of the sun. In order therefore to know, what is the will of God in a particular case, we have only to apply this general rule.

24. suppose, for instance, it were proposed to a reasonable man, to marry or enter into a new business: in order to know, whether this is the will of God, being assured, "It is the will of God concerning me, that I should be as holy and do as much good as I can," he has only to inquire, "In which of these states can I be most holy, and do the most good? And this is to be determined, partly by reason, and partly by experience. Experience tells him what advantages he has in his present state, either for being or doing good: and reason is to shew, what he certainly or probably will have in the state proposed. By comparing

these, he is to judge, which of the two may most conduce to his being and doing good: and as far as he knows this so far he is certain, what is the will of God.

25. Mean time the assistance of his Spirit is supposed, during the whole process of the inquiry. Indeed it is not easy to say, in how many ways that assistance is conveyed. He may bring many circumstances to our remembrance, may place others in a stronger and clearer light: may insensibly open our mind to receive conviction upon our heart. And to a concurrence of many circumstances of this kind, in favour what is acceptable in his sight, he may superadd such an unutterable peace of mind, and so uncommon a measure of his love, as will leave us no possibility of doubting. That this, even this, is his will concerning us.

26. This is the plain scriptural, rational way to know, what is the will of God in a particular case. But considering how seldom this way is taken, and what a flood of Enthusiasm must needs break in, on those who endeavour to know the will of God, by unscriptural, irrational ways: it were to be wished, that the expression itself, were far more sparingly used. The using it as some do, on the most trivial occasions, is a plain breach of the third commandment. It is a gross way of taking the name of God in vain, and betrays great irreverence toward him. Would it not be far better then, to use other expressions, which are not liable to such objections? For example. Instead of saying, on any particular occasion, "I want to know what is the will of God." Would it not be better to say, "I want to know, what will be most for my improvement: and what will make me most useful." This way of speaking is clear and unexceptionable. It is putting the matter on a plain scriptural issue, and that without any danger of Enthusiasm.

27. A third very common sort of Enthusiasm (if it does not co-incide with the former) is that of those who think to attain the end without using the means, by the immediate power of God. If indeed those means were providentially withheld, they would not fall under this charge. God can and sometimes does, in cases of this nature, exert his own immediate power. But they who expect this when they have those means, and will not use them, are proper Enthusiasts. Such are they who expect to understand the holy scriptures

Without reading them and meditating thereon : yea, without using all such helps as are in their power, and may probably conduce to that end. Such are they who designedly speak in the public assembly, without any premeditation. I say designedly : because there may be such circumstances as at sometimes make it unavoidable. But whoever despises that great means of speaking profitably, is so far an Enthusiast.

28. It may be expected that I should mention what some have accounted, a fourth sort of Enthusiasm, namely, The imagining those things to be owing to the providence of God, which are not owing thereto. But I doubt. I know not what things they are, which are not owing to the providence of God : in ordering, or, at least, in governing of which, this is not either directly or remotely concerned.-- Except nothing but sin : and even in the sins of others, I see the providence of God to me. I do not say, his general providence ; for this I take to be a sounding word, which means just nothing. And if there be a particular providence, it must extend to all persons and all things. So our Lord understood it, or he could never have said, Even the hairs of your head are all numbered. And, Not a sparrow falleth to the ground, without the will of your father which is in heaven. But if it be so, if God presides *universis tanquam singulis, et singulis tanquam universis* ; over the whole universe as over every single person, over every single person as over the whole universe : what is it (except only our own sins) which we are not to ascribe to the providence of God? So that I cannot apprehend, there is any room here, for the charge of Enthusiasm.

29. If it be said, the charge lies here : "when you impute this to providence, you imagine yourself the peculiar favorite of Heaven." I answer you have forgot some of the last words I spoke, *Præsidet universis tanquam singulis*. His providence is over all men in the universe, as much as over any single person. Dont you see, that he who believing this, imputes any thing which befalls him to providence, does not therein make himself more the favourite of Heaven, than he supposes every man under heaven to be? Therefore you have no pretence upon this ground, to charge him with Enthusiasm

30. Against every sort of this, it behoves us to guard, with the utmost diligence: considering the dreadful effects it has so often produced, and which indeed naturally result from it. Its immediate offspring is pride; it continually increases this source from whence it flows, and hereby it alienates us more and more, from the favour and from the life of God. It dries up the very springs of faith and love; of righteousness and true holiness. Seeing all these flow from grace. But God *resisteth the proud, and giveth grace only to the humble.*

31. Together with pride there will naturally arise an unadvisable and unconvincible spirit. So that into whatever error or fault the Enthusiast falls, there is small hope of his recovery. For reason will have little weight with him (as has been justly and frequently observed) who imagines he is led by an higher guide, by the immediate wisdom of God. And as he grows in pride, so he must grow in unadvisableness and in stubbornness also. He must be less and less capable of being convinced, less susceptible of persuasion; more and more attached to his own judgment and his own will, till he is altogether fixed and immoveable.

32. Being thus fortified both against the grace of God, and against all advice and help from man, he is wholly left to the guidance of his own heart, and of the king of the children of pride. No marvel then that he is daily more rooted and grounded in contempt of all mankind, in furious anger, in every unkind disposition, in every earthly and devilish temper. Neither can we wonder at the terrible outward effects, which have flowed from such dispositions in all ages: even all manner of wickedness, all the works of darkness, committed by those who called themselves Christians, while they wrought with greediness such things, as were hardly named even among the Heathens.

Such is the nature, such the dreadful effects of that many-headed monster Enthusiasm! From the consideration of which, we may now draw some plain inferences with regard to our own practice.

33. And, first, If Enthusiasm be a term, though so frequently used, yet so rarely understood, take *you* care, not to talk of you know not what, not to use the word till you understand it. As in all other points, so likewise in this;

learn to think before you speak. First, know the meaning of this hard word; and then use it, if need require.

34. But if so few, even among men of education and learning, much more among the common sort of men, understand this dark, ambiguous word, or have any fixed notion of what it means; then, secondly, Beware of judging or calling any man Enthusiast upon common report. This is by no means a sufficient ground, for giving any name of reproach to any man; least of all is it a sufficient ground, for so black a term of reproach as this. The more evil it contains, the more cautious you should be, how you apply it to any one: to bring so heavy an accusation without full proof, being neither consistent with justice nor mercy.

35. But if Enthusiasm be so great an evil, beware you are not entangled therewith yourself. Watch and pray that you fall not into the temptation. It easily besets those who fear or love God. O beware you do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. Do not imagine that you have attained that grace of God, to which you have not attained. You may have much joy: you may have a measure of love, and yet not have living faith. Cry unto God that he would not suffer you, blind as you are, to go out of the way: that you may never fancy yourself a believer in Christ, till Christ is revealed in you, and till his Spirit witnesses with your Spirit, that you are a child of God.

36. Beware you are not a fiery, persecuting Enthusiast. Do not imagine that God has called you (just contrary to the spirit of him you style your Master) to destroy men's lives, and not to save them. Never dream of forcing men into the ways of God. Think yourself, and let think. Use no constraint in matters of religion. Even those who are farthest out of the way, never *compel to come in*, by any other means, than reason, truth, and love.

37. Beware you do not run with the common herd of Enthusiasts, fancying you are a Christian when you are not. Presume not to assume that venerable name, unless you have clear, scriptural title thereto: unless you have the mind which was in Christ, and walk as he also walked.

38. Beware you do not fall into the second sort of Enthusiasm, fancying you have those *gifts* from God which you have not. Trust not in visions or dreams; in sudden

impressions, or strong impulses of any kind. Remember, it is not by these you are to know, what is *the will of God* on any particular occasion; but by applying the plain scripture-rule, with the help of experience and reason, and the ordinary assistance of the Spirit of God. Do not lightly take the name of God in your mouth: do not talk of *the will of God* on every trifling occasion. But let your words as well as your actions, be all tempered with reverence and godly fear.

59. Beware, lastly, of imagining you shall obtain the end, without using the means conducive to it. God *can* give the end, without any means at all: but you have no reason to think he *will*. Therefore constantly and carefully use all these means, which he has appointed to be the ordinary channels of his grace. Use every means which either reason or scripture recommends, as conducive (through the free love of God in Christ) either to the obtaining, or increasing any of the gifts of God. Thus expect a daily growth in that pure and holy religion, which the world always did, and always will call Enthusiasm: but which, to all who are saved from real Enthusiasm, from merely nominal Christianity, is the wisdom of God and the power of God, the glorious image of the Most High: righteousness and peace: a fountain of living water, springing up into everlasting life.



## SERMON XVI.

## THE NEW BIRTH.

JOHN iii. 7.

*Ye must be born again.*

1. **I**F any doctrine within the whole compass of christianity may be properly termed fundamental, they are doubtless these two, the doctrine of justification, and that of the new birth: the former relating to that great work, which God does *for us*, in forgiving our sins; the latter, to the great work, which God does *in us*, in renewing our fallen nature. In order of time, neither of these is before the other; in the moment we are justified by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Jesus, we are also *born of the Spirit*: but in order of thinking, as it is termed, justification precedes the new birth. We first conceive his wrath to be turned away, and then his Spirit to work in our hearts.

2. How great importance then must it be of to every child of man, thoroughly to understand these fundamental doctrines? From a full conviction of this, many excellent men have wrote very largely concerning justification, explaining every point relating thereto, and opening the scriptures which treat upon it. Many likewise have wrote on the new birth; and some of them largely enough: but yet not so clearly as might have been desired; nor so deeply and accurately: having either given a dark, abstruse account of it, or a slight and superficial one. Therefore a full, and at the same time, a clear account of the new birth seems to be wanting still: such as may enable us to give a satisfactory answer to these three questions, *first*, Why must we be born again? What is the foundation of this doctrine of the new birth? *Secondly*, How must we be born again? What is the nature of the new birth? And *thirdly*, Wherefore must we be born again? To what end is it necessary? These questions, by the assistance of God, I shall briefly and plainly answer, and then subjoin a few inferences which will naturally follow.

I. 1. And, first, Why must we be born again? What is the foundation of this doctrine? The foundation of it lies near as deep as the creation of the world: In the scriptural account whereof we read, \* *And God, the three-one God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: not barely in his natural image, a picture of his own immortality, a spiritual being, endued with understanding, freedom of will, and various affections: nor merely in his political image, the governor of this lower world, having dominion over the fishes of the sea, and over all the earth: but chiefly in his moral image, which according to the apostle, is † *righteousness and true holiness.* In this image of God was man made. God is love: accordingly man at his creation was full of love: which was the sole principle of all his tempers, thoughts, words and actions. God is full of justice, mercy and truth: so was man as he came from the hands of his Creator. God is spotless purity: and so man was in the beginning pure from every sinful blot. Otherwise God could not have pronounced him, as well as all the other works of his hands, ‡ *very good.* This he could not have been, had he not been pure from sin, and filled with righteousness and true holiness. For there is no medium; if we suppose an intelligent creature, not to love God, not to be righteous and holy, we necessarily suppose him not to be good at all: much less to be very good.*

2. But although man was made in the image of God, yet he was not made immutable. This would have been inconsistent with that state of trial, in which God was pleased to place him. He was therefore created able to stand, and yet liable to fall. And this God himself apprized him of, and gave him a solemn warning against it. Nevertheless man did not abide in honor: he fell from his high estate. He ate of the tree whereof the Lord had commanded him, Thou shalt not eat thereof. By this wilful act of disobedience to his Creator, this flat rebellion against his Sovereign, he openly declared, that he would no longer have God to rule over him: that he would be governed by his own will, and not the will of him that created him, and that he would not seek his happiness in God, but in the

\* Gen. i. 26, 27.

† Eph. iv. 24.

‡ Gen. i. 31.

world, in the works of his hands. Now God had told him before, In the day that thou eatest of that fruit thou shalt surely die. And the word of the Lord cannot be broken. Accordingly in that day he did die: he died to God, the most dreadful of all deaths. He lost the life of God: he was separated from him, in union with whom his spiritual life consisted. The body dies, when it is separated from the soul: the soul when it is separated from God. But this separation from God, Adam sustained in the day, the hour he ate of the forbidden fruit. And of this he gave immediate proof; presently shewing by his behaviour, that the love of God was extinguished in his soul, which was now alienated from the life of God. Instead of this, he was now under the power of servile fear, so that he fled from the presence of the Lord. Yea, so little did he retain even of the knowledge of him, who filleth heaven and earth, that he endeavored to *hide himself from the Lord God, among the trees of the garden!*—Gen. iii. 8. So had he lost both the knowledge and the love of God, without which the image of God could not subsist. Of this therefore he was deprived at the same time, and became unholy as well as unhappy. In the room of this, he had sunk into pride and self-will, the very image of the devil, and into sensual appetites and desires, the image of the beasts that perish.

3. If it be said, “Nay, but that threatening, In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die, refers to temporal death, and that alone, to the death of the body only;” The answer is plain; to affirm this, is flatly and palpably to make God a liar: to aver, that the God of truth positively affirmed a thing contrary to truth. For it is evident Adam did not die in this sense, in the day that he ate thereof. He lived in the sense opposite to this death, above nine hundred years after. So that this cannot possibly be understood of the death of the body, without impeaching the veracity of God. It must therefore be understood of spiritual death, the loss of the life and image of God.

4. And in Adam all died, all human kind, all the children of men who were then in Adam’s loins. The natural consequence of this is, that every one descended from him, comes into the world spiritually dead, dead to God, wholly dead in sin: entirely void of the life of God, void

of the image of God, of all that righteousness and holiness, wherein Adam was created. Instead of this, every man born in the world, now bears the image of the devil, in pride and self-will; the image of the beast, in sensual appetites and desires. This then is the foundation of the new birth, the entire corruption of our nature. Hence it is, that the being born in sin, we must be born again. Hence every one that is born of a woman, must be born of the Spirit of God.

II. 1. But how must a man be born again? What is the nature of the new birth? This is the second question. And a question it is, of the highest moment that can be conceived. We ought not therefore in so weighty a concern, to be content with a slight enquiry; but to examine it with all possible care, and to ponder it in our hearts, 'till we fully understand this important point, and clearly see, how we are to be born again.

2. Not that we are to expect any minute, philosophical account, of the manner how this is done. Our Lord sufficiently guards us against any such expectation, by the words immediately following the text: wherein he reminds Nicodemus of as indisputable a fact, as any in the whole compass of nature: which notwithstanding the wisest man under the sun, is not able fully to explain. The wind bloweth where it listeth, not by thy power or wisdom, and thou hearest the sound thereof: thou art absolutely assured, beyond all doubt, that it doth blow. But thou canst not tell, whence it cometh, neither whither it goeth. The precise manner how it begins and ends, rises and falls, no man can tell. So is every one that is born of the Spirit. Thou mayst be as absolutely assured of the fact, as of the blowing of the wind: but the precise manner how it is done, how the Holy Spirit works this in the soul, neither thou nor the wisest of the children of men is able to explain.

3. However it suffices for every rational and Christian purpose, that without descending into curious, critical enquiries, we can give a plain scriptural account of the nature of the new birth. This will satisfy every reasonable man, who desires only the salvation of his soul. The expression, being born again, was not first used by our Lord in his conversation with Nicodemus. It was well known before that time, and was in common use among the Jews,

when our Saviour appeared among them. When an adult Heathen was convinced, that the Jewish religion was of God, and desired to join therein, it was the custom to baptize him first, before he was admitted to circumcision.— And when he was baptized, he was said to be born again: by which they meant, that he who was before a child of the devil was now adopted into the family of God, and accounted one of his children. This expression therefore which Nicodemus, being a teacher in Israel, ought to have understood well, our Lord uses in conversing with him: only in a stronger sense than he was accustomed to. And this might be the reason of his asking, How can these things be? They cannot be literally. A man cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born. But they may, spiritually. A man may be born from above, born of God, born of the Spirit: in a manner which bears a very near analogy to the natural birth.

4. Before a child is born into the world, he has eyes, but sees not; he has ears, but does not hear. He has a very imperfect use of any other sense. He has no knowledge of any of the things of the world, or any natural understanding. To that manner of existence which he then has, we do not even give the name of life. It is then only when a man is born, that we say he begins to live. For as soon as he is born, he begins to see the light, and the various objects with which he is encompassed. His ears are then opened, and he hears the sounds which successively strike upon them. At the same time all the other organs of sense begin to be exercised upon their proper objects. He likewise breathes and lives in a manner wholly different from what he did before. How exactly doth the parallel hold in all these instances? While a man is in a mere natural state before he is born of God, he has, in a spiritual sense, eyes and sees not, a thick impenetrable veil lies upon them. He has ears, but hears not: he is utterly deaf to what he is most of all concerned to hear. His other spiritual senses are all locked up; he is in the same condition as if he had them not. Hence he has no knowledge of God, no intercourse with him; he is not at all acquainted with him. He has no true knowledge of the things of God, either of spiritual or eternal things. Therefore though he is a living man, he is a dead Christian. But

as soon as he is born of God, there is a total change in all these particulars. The eyes of his understanding are opened (such is the language of the great apostle :) and he who of old commanded light to shine out of darkness shining on his heart, he sees the light of the glory of God, his glorious love, in the face of Jesus Christ. His ears being opened, he is now capable of hearing the inward voice of God, saying, Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee : go and sin no more. This is the purport of what God speaks to his heart : Although perhaps not in these very words. He is now ready to hear whatsoever He that teacheth man knowledge is pleased from time to time to reveal to him. He "feels in his heart (to use the language of our church) the mighty working of the spirit of God : " not in a gross, carnal sense, as the men of the world stupidly and wilfully misunderstand the expression : though they have been told again and again, we mean thereby neither more nor less than this : he feels, is inwardly sensible of the graces which the Spirit of God works in his heart. He feels, he is conscious of a peace which passeth all understanding. He many times feels such a joy in God, as is unspeakable and full of glory. He feels the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him. And all his spiritual senses are then exercised to discern spiritual good and evil. By the use of these he is daily increasing in the knowledge of God, of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, and of all the things pertaining to his inward kingdom. And now he may be properly said to live : God having quickened him by his Spirit, he is alive to God through Jesus Christ. He lives a life which the world knoweth not of, a life which is hid with Christ in God.— God is continually breathing as it were, upon the soul, and his soul is breathing unto God. Grace is descending into his heart, and prayer and praise ascending to heaven. And by this intercourse between God and man, this fellowship with the Father and the Son, as by a kind of spiritual respiration, the life of God in the soul is sustained : and the child of God grows up, till he comes to the full measure of the stature of Christ.

5. From hence it manifestly appears, what is the nature of the new birth. It is that great change which God works in the soul, when he brings it into life : when he raises it

from the death of sin, to the life of righteousness. It is the change wrought in the whole soul by the almighty Spirit of God, when it is created anew in Christ Jesus, when it is renewed after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness: when the love of the world is changed into the love of God, pride into humility, passion into meekness; hatred, envy, malice, into a sincere, tender, disinterested love for all mankind. In a word, it is that change whereby the earthly, sensual, devilish mind, is turned into the mind which was in Christ Jesus. This is the nature of the new birth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit.

III. 1. It is not difficult for any who has considered these things, to see the necessity of the new birth, and to answer the third question, wherefore, to what ends is it necessary that we should be born again? It is very easily discerned, that this is necessary, first, in order to holiness. For what is holiness, according to the oracles of God?—Not a bare external religion, a round of outward duties, how many soever they be, and how exactly soever performed. No: gospel holiness is no less than the image of God stamped upon the heart. It is no other than the whole mind which was in Christ Jesus. It consists of all heavenly affections and tempers mingled together in one. It implies such a continual, thankful love, to him who hath not withheld from us his Son, his only Son, as makes it natural, and in a manner necessary, to us, to love every child of man, as fills us with bowels of mercies, kindness, gentleness, long-suffering. It is such a love of God as teaches us to be blameless in all manner of conversation; as enables us to present our souls and bodies, all we are, and all we have, all our thoughts, words and actions, a continual sacrifice to God, acceptable through Jesus Christ. Now this holiness can have no existence, till we are renewed in the image of our mind. It cannot commence in the soul, till that change be wrought, till by the power of the Highest overshadowing us we are brought from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God: that is, till we are born again; which therefore is absolutely necessary in order to holiness.

2. But without holiness no man shall see the Lord, shall see the face of God in glory. Of consequence the new

birth is absolutely necessary, in order to eternal salvation. Men may indeed flatter themselves (so desperately wicked and so deceitful is the heart of man!) that they may live in their sins till they come to the last gasp, and yet afterwards live with God. And thousands do really believe, that they have found a broad way that leadeth not to destruction. What danger, say they, can a woman be in, that is so harmless and so virtuous? What fear is there that so honest a man, one of so strict morality, should miss of heaven? Especially, if over and above all this, they constantly attend on church and sacrament. One of these will ask with all assurance, "What, shall not I do as well as my neighbours?" Yes, as well as your unholy neighbours: as well as your neighbours that die in their sins. For you will all drop into the pit together, into the nethermost hell. You will all lie together in the lake of fire, the lake of fire burning with brimstone. Then, at length you will see (but God grant that you may see it before!) the necessity of holiness in order to glory: and consequently of the new birth, since none can be holy, except he be born again.

3. For the same reason, except he be born again, none can be happy even in this world. For it is not possible, in the nature of things, that a man should be happy who is not holy. Even the poor, ungodly poet could tell us,

*Nemo malus felix:*

No wicked man is happy. The reason is plain. All unholy tempers are uneasy tempers. Not only malice, hatred, envy, jealousy, revenge, create a present hell in the breast, but even the softer passions, if not kept within due bounds, give a thousand times more pain than pleasure.—Even hope, when deferred (and how often must this be the case?) maketh the heart sick. And every desire which is not according to the will of God, is liable to pierce us through with many sorrows. And all those general sources of sin, pride, self-will and idolatry, are in the same proportion as they prevail, general sources of misery. Therefore as long as these reign in any soul, happiness has no place there. But they must reign till the bent of our nature is changed, that is, till we are born again. Consequently the new birth is absolutely necessary in order to happiness in this world, as well as in the world to come.



IV. I proposed in the last place, to subjoin a few inferences which naturally follow from the preceding observations.

1. And, first, It follows that baptism is not the new birth: they are not one and the same thing. Many indeed seem to imagine, they are just the same: at least they speak as if they thought so: but I do not know, that this opinion is publicly avowed, by any denomination of Christians whatever. Certainly it is not, by any within these kingdoms, whether of the established church, or dissenting from it. The judgment of the latter is clearly declared, in their large Catechism: *Q.* "What are the parts of a sacrament?" *A.* The parts of a sacrament are two: The one an outward and sensible sign; the other an inward and spiritual grace thereby signified. *Q.* What is baptism? *A.* Baptism is a sacrament, wherein Christ hath ordained the washing with water, to be a sign and seal of regeneration, by his Spirit." Here it is manifest, baptism, the sign, is spoken of as distinct from regeneration, the thing signified.

In the church catechism likewise the judgment of our church is declared with the utmost clearness. "What meanest thou by this word, Sacrament? I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. What is the outward part, or form in baptism? Water wherein the person is baptized, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. What is the inward part, or thing signified? A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness." Nothing, therefore, is plainer, than that according to the church of England, baptism is not the new birth.

But, indeed, the reason of the thing is so clear and evident, as not to need any other authority. For what can be more plain, than that the one is an external, the other an internal work? That the one is a visible, the other an invisible thing, and therefore wholly different from each other: the one being an act of man, purifying the body; the other, a change wrought by God in the soul. So that the former is just as distinguishable from the latter, as the soul from the body, or water from the Holy Ghost.

2. From the preceding reflections, we may, secondly, observe, that as the new birth is not the same thing with bap-

tism, so it does not always accompany baptism: they do not constantly go together. A man may possibly be born of water, and yet not be born of the Spirit. They may sometimes be the outward sign, where there is not the inward grace. I do not now speak with regard to infants: it is certain our church supposes, that all who are baptized in their infancy, are at the same time born again. And it is allowed, that the whole office for the baptism of infants proceeds upon this supposition. Nor is it an objection of any weight against this, that we cannot comprehend, how this work can be wrought in infants? For neither can we comprehend, how it is wrought in a person of riper years: But whatever be the case with infants, it is sure all of riper years who are baptized are not at the same time born again: The tree is known by its fruits: and hereby it appears too plain to be denied, that divers of those who were children of the devil before they were baptized, continue the same after baptism: for the works of their Father they do; they continue servants of sin, without any pretence either to inward or outward holiness.

3. A third inference which we may draw from what has been observed, is, that the new birth is not the same with sanctification. This is indeed taken for granted by many: particularly by an eminent writer, in his late treatise on the "Nature and Grounds of Christian Regeneration." To waive several other weighty objections which might be made to that tract, this is a palpable one: it all along speaks of regeneration as a progressive work, carried on in the soul by slow degrees, from the time of our first turning to God. This is undeniably true of sanctification; but of regeneration, the new birth, it is not true. This is a part of sanctification, not the whole; it is the gate of it, the entrance into it. When we are born again, then our sanctification, our inward and outward holiness begins. And thenceforward we are gradually to grow up in him who is our head. This expression of the apostle admirably illustrates the difference between one and the other, and farther points out the exact analogy there is between natural and spiritual things. A child is born of a woman in a moment, or at least in a very short time. Afterward he gradually and slowly grows, till he attains to the stature of a man. In like manner a child is born of God, in a short time, if not

in a moment. But it is by slow degrees that he afterwards grows up to the measure of the full stature of Christ. The same relation therefore which there is between our natural birth and our growth, there is also between our new birth and our sanctification.

4. One point more we may learn from the preceding observations. But it is a point of so great importance, as may excuse the considering it the more carefully, and prosecuting it at some length. What must one who loves the souls of men, and is grieved that any of them should perish, say to one whom he sees living in sabbath-breaking, drunkenness, or any other wilful sin? What can he say, if the foregoing observations are true, but you must be born again. "No, says a zealous man, that cannot be. How can you talk so uncharitably to the man? Has he not been baptized already? He cannot be born again now." Can he not be born again? Do you affirm this? Then he cannot be saved. Though he be as old as Nicodemus was, yet except he be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Therefore in saying "He cannot be born again," you in effect deliver him over to damnation. And where lies the uncharitableness now? On my side, or on yours? I say he may be born again, and so become an heir of salvation. You say, "He cannot be born again." And if so, he must inevitably perish. So you utterly block up his way to salvation, and send him to hell, out of mere charity!

But perhaps the sinner himself, to whom in real charity we say, You must be born again, has been taught to say, "I defy your new doctrine; I need not be born again. I was born again when I was baptized. What! would you have me deny my baptism?" I answer, first, There is nothing under heaven which can excuse a lie. Otherwise I should say to an open sinner, If you have been baptized, do not own it. For how highly does this aggravate your guilt? How will it increase your damnation? Was you devoted to God at eight days old, and have you been all these years devoting yourself to the devil? Was you, even before you had the use of reason, consecrated to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost? And have you ever since you had the use of it, been flying in the face of God, and consecrating yourself to Satan? Does the abomina-

tion of desolation, the love of the world, pride, anger, lust, foolish desire, and the whole train of vile affections stand where it ought not? Have you set up all these accursed things in that soul, which was once a temple of the Holy Ghost? Set apart for an habitation of God through the Spirit? Yea, solemnly give up to him? And do you glory in this, that you once belonged to God? O be ashamed! Blush! Hide yourself in the earth! Never boast more of what ought to fill you with confusion, to make you ashamed before God and man! I answer, secondly, you have already denied your baptism; and that in the most effectual manner. You have denied it a thousand and a thousand times; and you do so still day by day. For in your baptism you renounced the devil and all his works. Whenever, therefore, you give place to him again, whenever you do any of the works of the devil, then you deny your baptism. Therefore you deny it by every wilful sin: by every act of uncleanness, drunkenness or revenge; by every obscene or profane word; by every oath that comes out of your mouth. Every time you profane the day of the Lord, you thereby deny your baptism: yea, every time you do any thing to another, which you would not he should do to you. I answer, thirdly, be you baptized or unbaptized, you must be born again. Otherwise it is not possible you should be inwardly holy; and without inward as well as outward holiness, you cannot be happy even in this world; much less in the world to come. Do you say, "Nay, but I do no harm to any man; I am honest and just in all my dealings; I do not curse, or take the Lord's name in vain; I do not profane the Lord's day; I am no drunkard; I do not slander my neighbor, nor live in any wilful sin." If this be so, it were much to be wished, that all men went as far as you do. But you must go farther yet, or you cannot be saved: still you must be born again. Do you add, "I do go farther yet; for I not only do no harm, but do all the good I can." I doubt that fact; I fear you have had a thousand opportunities of doing good, which you have suffered to pass by unimproved, and for which therefore you are accountable to God. But if you had improved them all, if you really had done all the good you possibly could to all men, yet this does not at all alter the case: still you must be born again. Without this nothing will do any good

to your poor, sinful, polluted soul." "Nay, but I constantly attend all the ordinances of God: I keep to my church and sacrament." It is well you do. But all this will not keep you from hell, except you be born again. Go to church twice a day, go to the Lord's table every week, say ever so many prayers in private, hear ever so many good sermons, read ever so many good books, still you must be born again: none of these things will stand in the place of the new birth: no, nor any thing under heaven. Let this, therefore, if you have not already experienced this inward work of God, be your continual prayer, "Lord, add this to all thy blessings, let me be born again. Deny whatever thou pleasest, but deny not this, Let me be born from above. Take away whatsoever seemeth thee good, reputation, fortune, friends, health. Only give me this, To be born of the Spirit! To be received among the children of God. Let me be born, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. And then let me daily grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!"

## SERMON XVII.

## SELF-DENIAL.

LUKE ix. 23.

*And he said unto them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*

1. **I**F has been frequently imagined, that the direction here given, related chiefly, if not wholly to the apostles: at least to the Christians of the first ages, or those in a state of persecution. But this is a grievous mistake: for altho' our blessed Lord is here directing his discourse more immediately to his apostles, and those other disciples who attended him in the days of his flesh, yet in them he speaks to us, and to all mankind, without any exception or limitation. The very reason of the thing puts it beyond dispute, that the duty which is here enjoined, is not peculiar to them, or to the Christians of the early ages. It no more regards any particular order of men, or particular time, than any particular country. No: it is of the most universal nature, respecting all times and all persons. Yea, and all things: not meats and drinks only, and things pertaining to the senses. The meaning is, If any man, of whatever rank, station, circumstances, in any nation, in any age of the world, will effectually come after me, let him deny himself in all things: let him take up his cross, of whatever kind, yea, and that daily, and follow me.

2. The denying ourselves and the taking up our cross, in the full extent of the expression, is not a thing of small concern: it is not expedient only, as are some of the circumstantialia of religion; but it is absolutely, indispensably necessary, either to our becoming, or continuing his disciples. It is absolutely necessary, in the very nature of the thing, to our coming after him and following him. Inasmuch that as far as we do not practise it, we are not his disciples. If we do not continually deny ourselves, we do not learn of him, but of other masters. If we do not take up our cross daily, we do not come after him: but after

the world, or the prince of the world, or our own fleshly mind. If we are not walking in the way of the cross, we are not following him; we are not treading in his steps, but going back from, or at least wide of him.

3. It is for this reason that so many ministers of Christ, in almost every age and nation, particularly since the reformation of the church from the innovations and corruptions gradually crept into it, have wrote and spoke so largely on this important duty, both in their public discourses and private exhortations. This induced them to disperse abroad many tracts upon the subject; and some in our own nation. They knew both from the oracles of God, and from the testimony of their own experience, how impossible it was not to deny our master, unless we will deny ourselves: and how vainly we attempt to follow him that was crucified, unless we take up our own cross daily.

4. But may not this very consideration make it reasonable to enquire, If so much has been said and wrote on the subject already, what need is there to say or write any more? I answer, There are no inconsiderable numbers, even of people fearing God, who have not had the opportunity either of hearing what has been spoke, or reading what has been wrote upon it. And perhaps if they had read much of what has been written, they would not have been much profited. Many who have wrote, (some of them large volumes) do by no means appear to have understood the subject. Either they had imperfect views of the very nature of it (and then they could never explain it to others) or they were unacquainted with the due extent of it; they did not see how exceeding broad this command is: or they were not sensible of the absolute, the indispensable necessity of it. Others speak of it in so dark, so perplexed, so intricate, so mystical a manner, as if they designed rather to conceal it from the vulgar, than to explain it to common readers. Others speak admirably well, with great clearness and strength, on the necessity of self-denial; but then they deal in generals only, without coming to particular instances, and so are of little use to the bulk of mankind, to men of ordinary capacity and education. And if some of them so descend to particulars, it is to those particulars only, which do not affect the generality of men; since they seldom, if ever, occur in common life: such as the endu-

ring imprisonment or tortures: the giving up, in a literal sense, their houses or lands, their husbands or wives, children, or life itself: to none of which we are called, nor are likely to be, unless God should permit times of public persecution to return. In the mean time, I know of no writer in the English tongue, who has described the nature of self-denial, in plain and intelligible terms, such as lie level with common understandings, and applied it to those little particulars, which daily occur in common life. A discourse of this kind is wanted still: and it is wanted the more, because in every stage of the spiritual life, although there is a variety of particular hindrances, of our attaining grace or growing therein, yet are all resolvable into these general ones, either we do not deny ourselves, or we do not take up our cross.

In order to supply this defect in some degree, I shall endeavor to shew, first, What it is for a man to deny himself, and what to take up his cross; and, secondly, That if a man be not fully Christ's disciple, it is always owing to the want of this.

I. 1. I shall, first, endeavor to shew, What it is for a man, to deny himself, and take up his cross daily. This is a point which is, of all others most necessary to be considered, and thoroughly understood, even on this account, that it is of all others most opposed, by numerous and powerful enemies. All our nature must certainly rise up against this, even in its own defence: the world consequently, the men who take nature, not grace, for their guide, abhor the very sound of it. and the great enemy of our souls, well knowing its importance, cannot but move every stone against it. But this is not all: even those who have in some measure shaken off the yoke of the devil, who have experienced, especially of late years, a real work of grace in their hearts, yet are no friends to this grand doctrine of Christianity, though it is so peculiarly insisted on by their Master. Some of them are as deeply and totally ignorant concerning it, as if there was not one word about it in the bible. Others are farther off still, having unawares imbibed strong prejudices against it. These they have received partly from outside Christians; men of a fair speech and behaviour, who want nothing of godliness, but the power; nothing of religion but the spirit: and partly from those



who did once, if they do not now, taste of the powers of the world to come. But are there any of these who do not both practise self-denial themselves, and recommend it to others? You are little acquainted with mankind, if you doubt of this. There are whole bodies of men who do even declare war against it. To go no farther than London. Look upon the whole body of Pedestrians, who by the free mercy of God, have lately been called out of the darkness of nature, into the light of faith. Are they patterns of self-denial? How few of them even profess to practise it at all! How few of them recommend it themselves, or are pleased with them that do? Rather do they not continually represent it in the most odious colours? As if it were seeking salvation by works, or seeking to establish our own righteousness? And how readily do Antinomians of all kinds, from the smooth Moravian, to the boisterous, foul-mouthed Ranter, join the cry, with their silly, unmeaning cant, of legality, and preaching the law? Therefore you are in constant danger of being wheedled, hectorred, or ridiculed out of this important gospel-doctrine, either by false-teachers or false brethren: (more or less beguiled from the simplicity of the gospel) if you are not deeply grounded therein. Let fervent prayer then go before, accompany, and follow, what you are now about to read, that it may be written in your heart by the finger of God, so as never to be erased.

2. But what is self-denial? Wherein are we to deny ourselves? And whence does the necessity of this arise? I answer, The will of God is the supreme, unalterable rule for every intelligent creature: equally binding every angel in heaven, and every man upon earth. Nor can it be otherwise: this is the natural, necessary result of the relation between creatures and their Creator. But if the will of God be our one rule of action, in every thing, great and small, it follows by undeniable consequence, that we are not to do our own will in any thing. Here, therefore, we see at once the nature, with the ground and reason of self-denial. We see the nature of self-denial: it is the denying or refusing to follow our own will, from a conviction that the will of God is the only rule of action to us. And we see the reason thereof, because we are creatures; because it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.

3. This reason for self-denial must hold, even with regard to the angels of God in heaven: and with regard to man, innocent and holy, as he came out of the hands of his Creator. But a farther reason for it arises, from the condition wherein all men are since the fall. We are all now shapen in wickedness, and in sin did our mother conceive us. Our nature is altogether corrupt, in every power and faculty. And our will, depraved equally with the rest, is wholly bent to indulge our natural corruption. On the other hand it is the will of God, that we resist and counteract that corruption, not at some times, or in some things only, but at all times, and in all things. Here, therefore, is a farther ground for constant and universal self-denial.

4. To illustrate this a little farther. The will of God is a path leading straight to God. The will of man, which once ran parallel with it, is now another path, not only different from it, but in our present state directly contrary to it. It leads from God: if, therefore, we walk in the one, we must necessarily quit the other. We cannot walk in both. Indeed a man of faint heart and feeble hands, may go in two ways, one after the other. But he cannot walk in two ways at the same time: he cannot at one and the same time, follow his own will, and follow the will of God; he must chuse the one or the other: denying God's will, to follow his own, or denying himself, to follow the will of God.

5. Now it is undoubtedly pleasing for the time, to follow our own will, by indulging in any instance that offers, the corruption of our nature. By the following it in any thing, we so far strengthen the perverseness of our will: and by indulging it, we continually increase the corruption of our nature. So by the food which is agreeable to the palate we often increase a bodily disease. It gratifies the taste: but it inflames the disorder. It brings pleasure: but it also brings death.

6. On the whole, then, to deny ourselves, is to deny our own will, where it does not fall in with the will of God, and that, however pleasing it may be: it is, to deny ourselves any pleasure which does not spring from and lead to God: that is, in effect, to refuse going out of our way,

though into a pleasant, flowery path: to refuse what we know to be deadly poison, though agreeable to the taste.

7. And every one that would follow Christ, that would be his real disciple, must not only deny himself, but take up his cross also. A cross is, any thing contrary to our will, any thing displeasing to our nature. So that taking up our cross goes a little farther than denying ourselves: it rises a little higher, and is a more difficult task to flesh and blood: it being more easy to forego pleasure, than to endure pain.

8. Now in running the race which is set before us, according to the will of God, there is often a cross lying in the way, that is, something which is not joyous, but grievous, something which is contrary to our will, which is displeasing to our nature. What then is to be done? The choice is plain; either we must take up our cross, or we must turn aside from the way of God, from the holy commandment delivered to us: if we do not stop altogether, or turn back to everlasting perdition.

9. In order to the healing of that corruption, that evil disease which every man brings with him into the world, it is often needful, to pluck out as it were a right eye, to cut off a right hand: so painful is either the thing itself which must be done, or the only means of doing it: the parting, suppose, with a foolish desire, with an inordinate affection: or a separation from the object of it, without which it can never be extinguished. In the former kind, the tearing away such a desire or affection, when it is deeply rooted in the soul, is often like the piercing of a sword, yea, like the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow. The Lord then sits upon the soul as a refiner's fire, to burn up all the dross thereof. And this is a cross indeed: it is essentially painful: it must be so in the very nature of the thing. The soul cannot be thus torn asunder, it cannot pass through the fire without pain.

10. In the latter kind, the means to heal a sin-sick soul, to cure a foolish desire, an inordinate affection, are often painful, not in the nature of the thing, but from the nature of the disease. So when our Lord said to the rich young man, Go sell that thou hast, and give it to the poor, (as well knowing, this was the only means of healing his covetousness) the very thought of it gave him so much pain, that he went away sorrowful: chusing rather to part with his hope

of heaven, than his possessions on earth. This was a burden he could not consent to lift, a cross he would not take up. And in the one kind or the other every follower of Christ will surely have need to take up his cross daily.

11. The taking up differs a little from bearing his cross. We are then properly said to bear our cross, when we endure what is laid upon us without our choice, with meekness and resignation. Whereas we do not properly take up our cross, but when we voluntarily suffer what it is in our power to avoid: when we willingly embrace the will of God, though contrary to our own: when we chuse what is painful, because it is the will of our wise and gracious Creator.

12. And thus it behoves every disciple of Christ, to take up, as well as to bear his cross. Indeed in one sense, it is not his alone; it is common to him and many others: seeing there is no temptation befalls any man *ei me anthropinos*, but such as is common to men, such as is incident and adapted to their common nature, and situation in the present world. But in another sense, as it is considered with all its circumstances, it is his; peculiar to himself: it is prepared of God for him: it is given by God to him, as a token of his love: and if he receives it as such, and (after using such means to remove the pressure as Christian wisdom directs) lies as clay in the potter's hand, it is disposed and ordered by God for his good, both with regard to the quality of it, and in respect to its quantity and degree, its duration, and every other circumstance.

13. In all this we may easily conceive our blessed Lord to act as the physician of our souls, not merely for his own pleasure, but for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. If in searching our wounds he puts us to pain, it is only in order to heal them. He cuts away what is putrified or unsound, in order to preserve the sound part.—And if we freely chuse the loss of a limb, rather than the whole body should perish, how much more should we chuse figuratively, to cut off a right hand, rather than the whole soul should be cast into hell?

14. We see plainly then both the nature and ground, of taking up our cross. It does not imply the disciplining ourselves (as some speak) the literally tearing our own flesh: the wearing hair-cloth, or iron girdles, or any thing else

that would impair our bodily health : (although we know not what allowance God may make for those, who act thus through involuntary ignorance :) but the embracing the will of God, tho' contrary to our own : the chusing wholesome, though better, medicines : the freely accepting temporary pain, of whatever kind, and in whatever degree, when it is either essentially or accidentally necessary to eternal pleasure.

II. 1. I am, secondly, to shew, that it is always owing to the want either of self-denial, or taking up his cross, that any man does not thoroughly follow him, is not fully a disciple of Christ.

It is true, this may be partly owing in some cases, to the want of the means of grace : of hearing the true word of God spoken with power, of the sacraments, or of Christian fellowship. But where none of these is wanting, the great hindrance of our receiving or growing in the grace of God, is always the want of denying ourselves, or taking up our cross.

2. A few instances will make this plain. A man hears the word which is able to save his soul. He is well pleased with what he hears, acknowledges the truth, and is a little affected by it. Yet he remains dead in trespass and sins, senseless and unawakened. Why is this? Because he will not part with his bosom-sin, though he now knows it is an abomination unto the Lord. He came to hear, full of lust and unholy desire : and he will not part with them. Therefore no deep impression is made upon him, but his foolish heart is still hardened : that is, he is still senseless and unawakened, because he will not deny himself.

3. Suppose he begins to awake out of sleep, and his eyes are a little opened, why are they so quickly closed again? Why does he again sink into the sleep of death? Because he again yields to his bosom-sin : he drinks again of the pleasing poison. Therefore it is impossible that any lasting impression should be made upon his heart. That is, he relapses into his fatal insensibility, because he will not deny himself.

4. But this is not the case with all. We have many instances of those, who when once awakened sleep no more. The impressions once received, do not wear away ; they are not only deep, but lasting. And yet many of these

have not found what they seek : they mourn, and yet are not comforted. Now why is this? It is because they do not bring forth fruits meet for repentance : because they do not according to the grace they have received, cease from evil, and do good. They do not cease from the easily besetting sin, the sin of their constitution, of their education, or of their profession. Or they omit doing the good they may, and know they ought to do, because of some disagreeable circumstances attending it : that is, they do not attain faith, because they will not deny themselves, or take up their cross.

5. " But this man did receive the heavenly gift. He did taste of the powers of the world to come. He saw the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.— The peace which passeth all understanding, did rule his heart and mind ; and the love of God was shed abroad therein, by the Holy Ghost which was given unto him.— Yet he is now weak as another man. He again relishes the things of earth, and has more taste for the things which are seen, than for those which are not seen. The eye of his understanding is closed again, so that he cannot see him that is invisible. His love is waxed cold, and the peace of God no longer rules in his heart. And no marvel : for he has again given place to the devil, and grieved the Holy Spirit of God. He has turned again into folly, to some pleasing sin, if not in outward act, yet in heart." He has given place to pride, or anger, or desire ; to self-will, or stubbornness. Or he did not stir up the gift of God which was in him ; he gave way to spiritual sloth, and would not be at the pains of praying always, and watching thereunto with all perseverance. That is he made shipwreck of the faith, for want of self-denial and taking up his cross daily.

6. But perhaps he has not made shipwreck of the faith : he has still a measure of the Spirit of adoption, which continues to witness with his spirit that he is a child of God. However he is not going on to perfection : he is not, as once, hungry and thirsting after righteousness, panting after the whole image and full enjoyment of God, as the hart after the water brook. Rather he is weary and faint in his mind, and as it were hovering between life and death. And why is he thus, but because he has forgotten the word

of God, By works is faith made perfect? He does not use all diligence, in working the works of God. He does not continue instant in prayer, private as well as public: in communicating, hearing, meditation, fasting and religious conference. If he does not wholly neglect some of these means, at least he does not use them all, with his might. Or he is not zealous of works of charity, as well as works of piety. He is not merciful after his power, with the full ability which God giveth. He does not fervently serve the Lord, by doing good to men, in every kind, and in every degree he can, to their souls as well as their bodies. And why does he not continue in prayer? Because in times of dryness it is pain and grief unto him. He does not continue in hearing at all opportunities, because sleep is sweet; or it is cold, or dark, or rainy. But why does he not continue in works of mercy? Because he cannot feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, unless he retrench the expence of his own apparel, or use cheaper and less pleasing food. Beside which, the visiting the sick, or those that are in prison, is attended with many disagreeable circumstances.— And so are most works of spiritual mercy: reproof, in particular. He would reprove his neighbour; but sometimes shame, sometimes fear comes between. For he may expose himself not only to ridicule, but to heavier inconveniences too. Upon these and the like considerations, he omits one or more, if not all works of mercy and piety.— Therefore his faith is not made perfect, neither can he grow in grace: namely, because he will not deny himself, and take up his cross daily.

7. It manifestly follows, That it is always owing to the want, either of self-denial or taking up his cross that a man does not thoroughly follow his Lord, that he is not fully a disciple of Christ. It is owing to this, that he who is dead in sin, does not awake, though the trumpet be blown: that he who begins to awake out of sleep, yet has no deep or lasting conviction: that he who is deeply and lastingly convinced of sin, does not attain remission of sins: that some who have received this heavenly gift, retain it not, but make shipwreck of the faith: and that others, if they do not draw back to perdition, yet are weary and faint in their mind, and do not reach the mark of the prize of the high-calling of God in Christ Jesus.

III. 1. How easily may we learn hence, that they know neither the scripture nor the power of God, who directly or indirectly, in public or in private, oppose the doctrine of self-denial and the daily cross. How totally ignorant are these men, of an hundred particular texts, as well as of the general tenor of the whole oracles of God? And how entirely unacquainted must they be, with true, genuine, Christian experience! Of the manner wherein the Holy Spirit ever did, and does at this day work in the souls of men? They may talk indeed very loudly and confidently, (a natural fruit of ignorance) as though they were the only men who understood either the word of God, or the experience of his children. But their words are, in every sense, vain words: they are weighed in the balance and found wanting.

2. We may learn from hence, secondly, the real cause why not only many particular persons, but even bodies of men, who were once burning and shining lights, have now lost both their light and heat. If they did not hate and oppose, they at least lightly esteemed this precious gospel-doctrine. If they did not boldly say, *Abnegationem omnem proculcarnus, internocioni damus*; "We trample all self-denial under foot, we devote it to destruction:" yet they neither valued it according to its high importance nor took any pains in practising it. *Hanc mystici docent*, said that great, bad man, The mystic writers teach self-denial: no, the inspired writers. And God teaches it to every soul, who is willing to hear his voice.

3. We may learn from hence, thirdly, That it is not enough for a minister of the gospel, not to oppose the doctrine of self-denial, to say nothing concerning it. Nay he cannot satisfy his duty, by saying a little in favor of it. If he would indeed be pure from the blood of all men, he may speak of it frequently and largely: he must inculcate the necessity of it, in the clearest and strongest manner.--- He must press it with his might, on all persons, at all times and in all places: laying line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept. So shall he have a conscience void of offence: so shall he save his own soul and those that hear him.

4. Lastly, See that you apply this, every one of you, to your own soul. Meditate upon it when you are in secret:



ponder it in your heart. Take care not only to understand it thoroughly, but to remember it to your lives' end. Cry unto the strong for strength, that you may no sooner understand, than enter upon the practice of it. Delay not the time, but practise it immediately, from this very hour: practise it universally, on every one of the thousand occasions which occur in all circumstances of life. Practise it daily; without intermission, from the hour you first set your hand to the plough: and enduring therein to the end, till your spirit returns to God.

## SERMON XVIII.

### THE USE OF MONEY.

LUKE xvi. 9.

*I say unto you, make unto yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into the everlasting habitations.*

1. **O**UR Lord having finished the beautiful parable of the prodigal son, which he had particularly addressed to those who murmured at his receiving publicans and sinners, adds another relation of a different kind, addressed rather to the children of God. He said unto his disciples (ver. 1.) not so much to the Scribes and Pharisees, to whom he had been speaking before—There was a certain rich man, who had a steward, and he was accused to him of wasting his goods. And calling him he said, Give me an account of thy stewardship, for thou canst be no longer steward. (ver. 2.) After reciting the method which the bad steward used, to provide against the day of necessity, our Saviour adds, His Lord commended the unjust steward, namely in this respect, that he used timely precaution, and subjoins this weighty reflection, The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children

of light, (ver. 8.) Those who seek no other portion than this world, are wiser, (not absolutely; for they are, one and all, the veriest fools, the most egregious mad men under heaven, but) in their generation, in their own way: they are more consistent with themselves, they are truer to their acknowledged principles, they more steadily pursue their end, than the children of light, than they who see the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.—Then follow the words above recited. And I—the only begotten Son of God, the Creator, Lord and possessor of heaven and earth and all that is therein: the judge of all, to whom ye are to give an account of your stewardship when ye can be no longer stewards—I say unto you, learn in this respect, even of the unjust steward, make yourselves friends, by wise, timely precaution, of the mammon of unrighteousness. Mammon means riches or money. It is termed the mammon of unrighteousness, because of the unrighteous manner wherein it is frequently procured, and wherein even that which was honestly procured, is generally employed. Make yourselves friends of this by doing all possible good, particularly to the children of God: that when ye fail, when ye return to dust, when ye have no more place under the sun, those of them who are gone before may receive you, may welcome you into the everlasting habitations.

2. An excellent branch of Christian wisdom is here inculcated by our Lord on all his followers, namely, the right use of money; a subject largely spoken of, after their manner, by men of the world: but not sufficiently considered by those whom God hath chosen out of the world. These generally do not consider as the importance of the subject requires, the use of this excellent talent. Neither do they understand how to employ it to the greatest advantage; the introduction of which into the world, is one admirable instance of the wise and gracious providence of God. It has indeed been the manner of poets, orators and philosophers, in almost all ages and nations, to rail at this, as the grand corrupter of the world, the bane of virtue, the pest of human society. Hence nothing so commonly heard as,

*Ferrum, Ferroq; nocentius aurum:*

And "Gold, more mischievous than keenest steel."  
Hence the lamentable complaint

*Effodiuntur opes, irritamenta malorum.*

Nay, one celebrated writer gravely exhorts his countrymen, in order to banish all vice at once, to "throw all their money into the sea."

*In mare proximum,*

*Summi materiem mali!*

But is not all this mere empty rant? Is there any solid reason therein? By no means. For let the world be as corrupt as it will, is gold or silver to blame? The love of money, we know, is the root of all evil: but not the thing itself. The fault does not lie in the money, but in them that use it. It may be used ill: and what may not? But it may likewise be used well: it is full as applicable to the best, as to the worst uses. It is of unspeakable service to all civilized nations, in all the common affairs of life. It is a most compendious instrument of transacting all manner of business, and (if we use it according to Christian wisdom) doing all manner of good. It is true, were man in a state of innocence, or were all men filled with the Holy Ghost, so that like the infant church at Jerusalem, no man counted any thing he had his own, but distribution was made to every one as he had need, the use of it would be superseded: as we cannot conceive there is any thing of the kind among the inhabitants of heaven. But in the present state of mankind, it is an excellent gift of God, answering the noblest ends. In the hands of his children, it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, raiment for the naked. It gives to the traveller and the stranger where to lay his head. By it we may supply the place of an husband to the widow, and of a father to the fatherless. We may be a defence for the oppressed, a means of health to the sick, of ease to them that are in pain: it may be as eyes to the blind, as feet to the lame: yea, a lifter up from the gates of death.

3. It is therefore of the highest concern, that all who fear God, know how to employ this valuable talent: that they be instructed, how it may answer these glorious ends, and in the highest degree. And perhaps all the instructions which are necessary for this, may be reduced to three plain rules, by the exact observance whereof, we may approve ourselves faithful stewards of the mammon of unrighteousness.

I. 1. The first of these is (he that heareth let him understand!) *Gain all you can.* Here we may speak like the children of the world: we meet them on their own ground. And it is our bounden duty to do this: we ought to gain all we can gain, without buying gold too dear, without paying more for it than it is worth. But this it is certain we ought not to do; we ought not to gain money at the expence of life: nor (which is in effect the same thing) at the expence of our health. Therefore no gain whatsoever should induce us to enter into, or to continue in any employ, which is of such a kind, or is attended with so hard or so long labour, as to impair our constitution. Neither should we begin or continue in any business, which necessarily deprives us of proper seasons for food and sleep in such a proportion as our nature requires. Indeed there is a great difference here: some employments are absolutely and totally unhealthy: as those which imply the dealing much with arsenic, or other equally hurtful minerals: or the breathing an air tainted with steams of melting lead, which must at length destroy the firmest constitution. Others may not be absolutely unhealthy, but only to persons of a weak constitution. Such are those which require many hours to be spent in writing; especially if a person write sitting, and lean upon his stomach, or remain long in an uneasy posture. But whatever it is which reason or experience shews to be destructive of health or strength, that we may not submit to; seeing the life is more valuable than meat, and the body than raiment. And if we are already engaged in such an employ, we should exchange it as soon as possible, for some, which, if it lessen our gain, will however not lessen our health.

2. We are, secondly, to gain all we can, without hurting our mind any more than our body. For neither may we hurt this: we must preserve, at all events, the spirit of an

healthful mind. Therefore we may not engage or continue in any sinful trade, any that is contrary to the law of God, or of our country. Such are all that necessarily imply our robbing or defrauding the king of his lawful customs. For it is at least as sinful, to defraud the king of his right, as to rob our fellow-subjects. And the king has full as much right to his customs, as we have to our houses and apparel. Other businesses there are, which however innocent in themselves, cannot be followed with innocence now: at least not in England: such, for instance, as will not afford a competent maintenance, without cheating or lying, or conformity to some custom which is not consistent with a good conscience. These likewise are sacredly to be avoided, whatever gain they may be attended with, provided we follow the custom of the trade. For, to gain money, we must not lose our souls. There are yet others which many pursue with perfect innocence, without hurting either their body or mind. And yet perhaps you cannot; either they may entangle you in that company, which would destroy your soul: and by repeated experiments it may appear, that you cannot separate the one from the other: or there may be an *idiosyncrasy*, a peculiarity in your constitution of soul (as there is in the bodily constitution of many) by reason whereof that employment is deadly to you, which another may safely follow. So I am convinced from many experiments, I could not study to any degree of perfection, either mathematics, arithmetic, or algebra, without being a Deist, if not an Atheist. And yet others may study them all their lives, without sustaining any inconvenience. None therefore can here determine for another, but every man must judge for himself, and abstain from whatever he in particular finds to be hurtful to his soul.

3. We are, thirdly, to gain all we can, without hurting our neighbour. But this we may not, cannot do, if we love our neighbour as ourselves. We cannot, if we love every one as ourselves, hurt any one in his substance. We cannot devour the increase of his lands, and perhaps the lands and houses themselves, by gaining, by over-grown bills (whether on account of physic, or law, or any thing else) or by requiring or taking such interest, as even the laws of our country forbid. Hereby all pawn-broking is excluded: seeing whatever good we might do thereby, all

unprejudiced men see with grief, it is abundantly overbalanced by the evil. And if it were otherwise, yet we are not allowed to do evil that good may come. We cannot, consistent with brotherly love, sell our goods below the market price. We cannot study to ruin our neighbour's trade, in order to advance our own. Much less can we entice away, or receive any of his servants or workmen whom he has need of. None can gain, by swallowing up his neighbour's substance, without gaining the damnation of hell.

4. Neither may we gain, by hurting our neighbour in his body. Therefore we may not sell any thing which tends to impair health. Such is eminently all that liquid fire, commonly called drams or spirituous liquors. It is true, these may have a place in medicine: they may be of use in some bodily disorders: (although there would rarely be occasion for them, were it not for the unskilfulness of the practitioner.) Therefore such as prepare and sell them only for this end, may keep their conscience clear. But who are they? Who prepare and sell them only for this end? Do you know ten such distillers in England? Then excuse these. But all who sell them in the common way, to any that will buy, are poisoners-general. They murder his Majesty's subjects by wholesale, neither does their eye pity or spare. They drive them to hell, like sheep: and what is their gain? Is it not the blood of these men?—Who then would envy their large estates and sumptuous palaces? A curse is in the midst of them: the curse of God cleaves to the stones, the timber, the furniture of them. The curse of God is in their gardens, their walks, their groves; a fire that burns to the nethermost hell.—Blood, blood is there: the foundation, the floor, the walls, the roof are stained with blood! And canst thou hope, O thou man of blood, though thou art clothed in scarlet and fine linen, and farrest sumptuously every day: canst thou hope to deliver down thy fields of blood, to the third generation? Not so; for there is a God in heaven: therefore thy name shall soon be rooted out. Like as those whom thou hast destroyed, body and soul, thy memorial shall perish with thee.

5. And are not they partakers of the same guilt, though in a lower degree, whether surgeons, apothecaries or phy-

sicians, who play with the lives or health of men to enlarge their own gain? Who purposely lengthen the pain or disease, which they are able to remove speedily? Who protract the cure of their patient's body, in order to plunder his substance? Can any man be clear before God who does not shorten every disorder, as much as he can, and remove all sickness and pain, as soon as he can? He cannot: for nothing can be more clear, than that he does not love his neighbour as himself; than that he does not do unto others, as he would they should do unto himself.

6. This is dear-bought gain. And so is whatever is procured, by hurting our neighbour in his soul: by ministring, suppose, either directly or indirectly to his unchastity or intemperance: which certainly none can do, who has any fear of God, or any real desire of pleasing him. It nearly concerns all those to consider this, who have any thing to do with taverns, victualing-houses, opera-houses, play-houses, or any other places of public, fashionable diversion. If these profit the souls of men, you are clear; your employment is good, and your gain innocent. But if they are either sinful in themselves, or natural inlets to sin of various kinds, then it is to be feared, you have a sad account to make. O beware lest God say in that day—These have perished in their iniquity, but their blood do I require at thy hands.

7. These cautions and restrictions being observed, it is the bounden duty of all who are engaged in worldly business, to observe that first and great rule of Christian wisdom with respect to money, Gain all you can. Gain all you can by honest industry: use all possible diligence in your calling. Lose no time: if you understand yourself and your relation to God and man, you know you have none to spare. If you understand your particular calling as you ought, you will have no time that hangs upon your hands. Every business will afford some employment sufficient for every day and every hour. That wherein you are placed, if you follow it in earnest, will leave you no leisure for silly, unprofitable diversions. You have always something better to do, something that will profit you, more or less. And whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. Do it as soon as possible: no delay! No putting off from day to day, or from hour to hour:—

Never leave any thing till to-morrow, which you can do to-day. And do it as well as possible. Do not sleep or yawn over it: put your whole strength to the work. Spare no pains. Let nothing be done by halves, or in a slight and careless manner. Let nothing in your business be left undone, if it can be done by labour or patience.

8. Gain all you can, by common sense, by using in your business all the understanding which God has given you. It is amazing to observe, how few do this: how men run on in the same dull track with their forefathers. But whatever they do who know not God, this is no rule for you. It is a shame for a Christian, not to improve upon them, in whatever he takes in hand. You should be continually learning, from the experience of others, or from your own experience, reading and reflection, to do every thing you have to do better to-day, than you did yesterday. And see that you practise whatever you learn, that you may make the best of all that is in your hands.

II. 1. Having gained all you can, by honest wisdom, and unwearied diligence, the second rule of Christian prudence is, *Save all you can*. Do not throw the precious talent into the sea: leave that folly to Heathen philosophers. Do not throw it away in idle expenses, which is just the same as throwing it into the sea. Expend no part of it merely to gratify the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life.

2. Do not waste any part of so precious a talent, merely in gratifying the desires of the flesh; in procuring the pleasures of sense of whatever kind; particularly in enlarging the pleasure of tasting. I do not mean, avoid gluttony and drunkenness only: an honest Heathen would condemn these. But there is a regular, reputable, kind of sensuality, an elegant epicurism, which does not immediately disorder the stomach, nor (sensibly at least) impair the understanding. And yet (to mention no other effects of it now) it cannot be maintained without considerable expence. Cut off all this expence; despise delicacy and variety, and be content with what plain nature requires.

3. Do not waste any part of so precious a talent, merely in gratifying the desire of the eye, by superfluous or expensive apparel, or by needless ornaments. Waste no part of it in curiously adorning your houses, in superfluous or ex-



pensive furniture: in costly pictures, painting, gilding, books: in elegant (rather than useful) gardens. Let your neighbours, who know nothing better, do this: Let the dead bury their dead. But what is that to thee? says our Lord; Follow thou me. Are you willing? Then you are able so to do.

4. Lay out nothing to gratify the pride of life, to gain the admiration or praise of men. This motive of expence is frequently interwoven with one or both of the former. Men are expensive in diet, or apparel, or furniture, not barely to please their appetite, or to gratify their eye, their imagination, but their vanity too. So long as thou dost well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee. So long as thou art clothed in purple and fine linen, and farest sumptuously every day, no doubt many will applaud thy elegance of taste, thy generosity and hospitality. But do not buy their applause so dear. Rather be content with the honor that cometh from God.

5. Who would expend any thing in gratifying these desires, if he considered, that to gratify them is to increase them? Nothing can be more certain than this: daily experience shews, the more they are indulged, they increase the more. Whenever therefore you expend any thing to please your taste or other senses, you pay so much for sensuality. When you lay out money to please your eye, you give so much for an increase of curiosity, for a stronger attachment to these pleasures, which perish in the using. While you are purchasing any thing which men use to applaud, you are purchasing more vanity. Had you not then enough of vanity, sensuality, curiosity before? Was there need of any addition? And would you pay for it too?—What manner of wisdom is this? Would not the literally throwing your money into the sea, be a less mischievous folly?

6. And why should you throw away money upon your children, any more than upon yourself, in delicate food, in gay or costly apparel, in superfluities of any kind? Why should you purchase for them, more pride or lust, more vanity, or foolish and hurtful desires? They do not want any more: they have enough already: nature has made ample provision for them. Why should you be at farther

expende to increase their temptations and snares, and to pierce them through with more sorrows?

7. Do not leave it to them, to throw away. If you have good reason to believe they would waste what is now in your possession, in gratifying, and thereby increasing the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life; at the peril of theirs and your own soul, do not set these traps in their way. Do not offer your sons or your daughters unto Belial, any more than unto Moloch. Have pity upon them, and remove out of their way what you may easily foresee would increase their sins, and consequently plunge them deeper into everlasting perdition.—How amazing then is the infatuation of those parents, who think they can never leave their children enough? What! cannot leave them enough of arrows, fire-brands and death? Not enough of foolish and hurtful desires? Not enough of pride, lust, ambition, vanity? Not enough of everlasting burnings! Poor wretch! thou fearest where no fear is. Surely both thou and they, when ye are lifting up your eyes in hell, will have enough both of the worm that never dieth, and of the fire that never shall be quenched.

8. “What then would you do, if you was in my case? If you had a considerable fortune to leave?” Whether I would do it or no, I know what I ought to do: this will admit of no reasonable question. If I had one child, elder or younger, who knew the value of money, one who I believed would put it to the true use, I should think it my absolute, indispensable duty, to leave that child the bulk of my fortune; and to the rest just so much as would enable them to live in the manner they had been accustomed to do. “But what if all your children were equally ignorant of the true use of money?” I ought then (hard saying, who can hear it?) to give each what would keep him above want: and to bestow all the rest in such a manner as I judged would be most for the glory of God.

III. 1. But let not any man imagine, that he has done any thing, barely by going thus far, by gaining and saving all he can, if he were to stop here. All this is nothing, if a man go not forward, if he does not point all this at a farther end. Nor indeed can a man be properly said to save any thing, if he only lays it up. You may as well throw your money into the sea, as bury it in the earth. And you

may as well bury it in the earth, as in your chest, or in the Bank of England. Not to use, is effectually to throw it away. If therefore you would indeed make yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, add the third rule to the two preceding. Having first gained all you can and secondly saved all you can, then *give* all you can.

2. In order to see the ground and reason of this, consider, when the Possessor of heaven and earth brought you into being and placed you in this world, he placed you here not as a proprietor, but a steward. As such he intrusted you for a season with goods of various kinds. But the sole property of these still rests in him, nor can ever be alienated from him. As you yourself are not your own, but his, such is likewise all that you enjoy. Such is your soul, and your body, not your own, but God's. And so is your substance in particular. And he has told you in the most clear and express terms, how you are to employ it for him, in such a manner, that it may be an holy sacrifice, acceptable through Christ Jesus. And this light, easy service he has promised to reward with an eternal weight of glory.

3. The directions which God has given us, touching the use of our worldly substance, may be comprised in the following particulars. If you desire to be a faithful and wise steward, out of that portion of your Lord's goods, which he has for the present lodged in your hands, but with the right of resuming whenever it pleases him, first, provide things needful for yourself, food to eat, raiment to put on, whatever nature moderately requires, for preserving the body in health and strength: secondly, provide these for your wife, your children, your servants, or any others who pertain to your household. If when this is done, there be an overplus left, then do good to them that are of the household of faith. If there be an overplus still, as you have opportunity, do good unto all men. In so doing, you give all you can: nay, in a sound sense, all you have: for all that is laid out in this manner, is really given to God.—You render unto God the things that are God's, not only by what you give to the poor, but also by that which you expend in providing things needful for yourself and your household.

4. If then a doubt should at any time arise in your mind, concerning what you are going to expend, either on yourself or any part of your family, you have an easy way to remove it. Calmly and seriously enquire, 1. In expending this, am I acting according to my character? Am I acting herein, not as a proprietor, but as a steward of my Lord's goods? 2. Am I doing this in obedience to his word? In what scripture does he require me so to do? 3. Can I offer up this action, this expence, as a sacrifice to God through Jesus Christ? 4. Have I reason to believe, that for this very work I shall have a reward at the resurrection of the just? You will seldom need any thing more to remove any doubt which arises on this head: but by this fourfold consideration you will receive clear light as to the way wherein you should go.

5. If any doubt still remain, you may farther examine yourself by prayer, according to those heads of enquiry. Try whether you can say to the Searcher of Hearts, your conscience not condemning you, "Lord, thou seest, I am going to expend this sum on that food, apparel, furniture. And thou knowest, I act therein with a single eye, as a steward of thy goods, expending this portion of them thus, in pursuance of the design thou hadst in intrusting me with them. Thou knowest I do this, in obedience to thy word, as thou commandest, and because thou commandest it. Let this, I beseech thee, be an holy sacrifice, acceptable through Jesus Christ? And give me a witness in myself, that for this labour of love, I shall have a recompence, when thou rewardest every man according to his works." Now if your conscience bear you witness in the Holy Ghost, that this prayer is well pleasing to God, then have you no reason to doubt, but that expence is right and good, and such as will never make you ashamed.

6. You see then what it is, to make yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, and by what means you may procure, that when ye fall they may receive you into the everlasting habitations. You see the nature and extent of truly Christian prudence, so far as it relates to the use of that great talent, Money. Gain all you can, without hurting either yourself or your neighbour, in soul or body; by applying hereto with unintermitted diligence, and with all the understanding which God has given you.

he is at liberty to use it as he pleases. It is not so with a steward; he is not at liberty to use what is lodged in his hands, as he pleases, but as his master pleases. He has no right to dispose of any thing which is in his hands, but according to the will of his Lord. For he is not the proprietor of any of these things, but barely intrusted with them by another: and intrusted on this express condition, that he shall dispose of all as his master orders. Now this is exactly the case of every man, with relation to God. We are not at liberty to use what he has lodged in our hands, as we please, but as he pleases, who alone is the Possessor of heaven and earth, and the Lord of every creature. We have no right to dispose of any thing we have, but according to his will, seeing we are not proprietors of any of these things: they are all, as our Lord speaks, *allogria*, belonging to another person; nor is any thing properly our own, in the land of our pilgrimage. We shall not receive *ta idia* our own things, till we come to our own country. Eternal things only are our own: with all these temporal things we are barely intrusted by another: the Disposer and Lord of all. And he intrusts us with them on this express condition, that we use them only as our master's goods, and according to the particular directions, which he has given us in his word.

2. On this condition he has intrusted us with our souls, our bodies, our goods, and whatever other talents we have received. But in order to impress this weighty truth on our hearts, it will be needful to come to particulars.

And first, God has intrusted us with our soul, an immortal spirit, made in the image of God, together with all the powers and faculties thereof, understanding, imagination, memory; will, and a train of affections, either included in it, or closely dependent upon it; love and hatred, joy and sorrow, respecting present good and evil; desire and aversion, hope and fear, respecting that which is to come. All these St. Paul seems to include in two words, when he says, The peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds. Perhaps indeed the latter word, *noemata*, might rather be rendered thoughts: provided we take that word in its most extensive sense, for every perception of the mind, whether active or passive.

3. Now of all these, it is certain, we are only stewards. God has intrusted us with these powers and faculties, not that we may employ them according to our own will, but according to the express orders which he has given us: (although it is true, that in doing his will, we most effectually secure our own happiness, seeing it is herein only that we can be happy, either in time or in eternity.) Thus, we are to use our understanding, our imagination, our memory, wholly to the glory of him that gave them. Thus our will is to be wholly given up to him, and all our affections to be regulated as he directs. We are to love and hate, to rejoice and grieve, to love and shun, to hope and fear, according to the rule which he prescribes, whose we are, and whom we are to serve in all things. Even our thoughts are not our own in this sense: they are not at our own disposal: but for every different motion of our mind, we are accountable to our great Master.

4. God has, secondly, intrusted us with our senses, (those exquisite and perfect machines, so tenderly and wonderfully made) which he has possest and made us use of. He has intrusted us with the organs of taste, of sight, hearing, and the rest: but none of these are given us as our own, to be employed according to our own will. None of these are lent us in such a sense, as to leave us at liberty to use them as we please for a season. No; we have received them on these very terms, that as long as they abide with us, we should employ them all, in that very manner, and no other, which he appoints.

5. It is on the same terms that he imparted to us that most excellent talent of speech. Thou hast given me a tongue, says the ancient writer, that I may praise thee therewith. For this purpose was it given to all the children of men, to be employed in glorifying God. Nothing therefore is more ungrateful, or more absurd, than to think or say, our tongues are our own. That cannot be unless we have created ourselves, and so are independent on the Most High. Nay, but it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves. The manifest consequence is, that he is still Lord over us, in this, as in all other respects. It follows, that there is not a word of our tongue, for which we are not accountable to him.

Save all you can, by cutting off every expence, which serves only to indulge foolish desire: to gratify either the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life.—Waste nothing, living or dying, on sin or folly, whether for yourself or your children. And then Give all you can, or in other words, give all you have to God. Do not stint yourself, like a Jew rather than a Christian to this or that proportion. Render unto God, not a tenth, not a third, not half, but all that is God's, be it more or less: by employing all, on yourself, your household, the household of faith and all mankind, in such a manner, that you may give a good account of your stewardship when you can be no longer stewards: in such a manner as the oracles of God direct, both by general and particular precepts: in such a manner, that whatever ye do may be a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour to God; and that every act may be rewarded in that day, when the Lord cometh with all his saints.

7. Brethren, can we be either wise or faithful stewards, unless we thus manage our Lord's goods? We cannot; as not only the oracles of God, but our own conscience beareth witness. Then why should we delay? Why should we confer any longer with flesh and blood, or men of the world? Our kingdom, our wisdom is not of this world. Heathen custom is nothing to us. We follow no men any farther, than they are followers of Christ. Hear ye him: yea, to-day, while it is called to-day, hear and obey his voice. At this hour and from this hour do his will: fulfil his word, in this and in all things. I intreat you, in the name of the Lord Jesus, act up to the dignity of your calling. No more sloth! whatsoever your hand findeth to do, do it with your might. No more waste! Cut off every expence which fashion, caprice, or flesh and blood demand. No more covetousness! But employ whatever God has entrusted you with, in doing good, all possible good, in every possible kind and degree, to the household of faith, to all men. This is no small part of the wisdom of the just: give all ye have, as well as all ye are, a spiritual sacrifice to him, who withheld not from you his Son, his only Son: so laying up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that ye may attain eternal life.

## SERMON XIX.

## THE GOOD STEWARD.

LUKE XVI. 2.

*Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou canst be no longer steward.*

1. **T**HE relation which man bears to God, the creature to his Creator, is exhibited to us in the oracles of God under various representations. Considered as a sinner, a fallen creature, he is there represented as a debtor to his Creator. He is also frequently represented as a servant, which indeed is essential to him as a creature: inasmuch that this appellation is given to the Son of God when in his state of humiliation: he took upon him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men.

2. But no character more exactly agrees with the present state of man than that of a steward. Our blessed Lord frequently represents him as such; and there is a peculiar propriety in the representation. It is only in one particular respect, namely, as he is a sinner, that he is styled a debtor. And when he is styled a servant, the appellation is general and indeterminate. But a steward is a servant of a particular kind: such a one as man is in all respects. This appellation is exactly expressive of his situation in the present world; specifying what kind of servant he is to God, and what kind of service his divine Master expects from him.

It may be of use then to consider this point thoroughly, and to make our full improvement of it. In order to this, let us first, inquire, in what respects we are now God's stewards. Let us, secondly, observe, that when he requires our souls of us, we can be no longer stewards. It will then only remain, as we may in the third place observe, to give an account of our stewardship.

I. 1. And, first, We are to enquire, in what respects we are now God's stewards. We are now indebted to him for all we have; but although a debtor is obliged to return what he has received, yet until the time of payment comes



6. To him we are equally accountable for the use of our hands and feet, and all the members of our body. These are so many talents which are committed to our trust, until the time appointed by the Father. Until then, we have the use of all these; but as stewards, not as proprietors; to the end, we should render them not as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but as instruments of righteousness unto God.

7. God has intrusted us, thirdly, with a portion of worldly goods, with food to eat, raiment to put on, and a place where to lay our head, with not only the necessaries, but the conveniences of life. Above all, he has committed to our charge that precious talent, which contains all the rest, money: indeed it is unspeakably precious, if we are wise and faithful stewards of it: if we employ every part of it for such purposes as our blessed Lord has commanded us to do.

8. God has intrusted us, fourthly, with several talents, which do not properly come under any of these heads: such is bodily strength: such are health, a pleasing person, an agreeable address: such are learning and knowledge in their various degrees, with all the other advantages of education. Such is the influence which we have over others, whether by their love and esteem of us, or by power: power to do them good or hurt, to help or hinder them in the circumstances of life. Add to these that invaluable talent of time, with which God intrusts us from moment to moment. Add, lastly, that on which all the rest depend, and without which they would all be curses, not blessings: namely, the grace of God, the power of his Holy Spirit, which alone worketh in us all that is acceptable in his sight.

II. 1. In so many respects are the children of men, stewards of the Lord, the Possessor of heaven and earth. So large a portion of his goods, of various kinds, hath he committed to their charge. But it is not for ever, nor indeed for any considerable time. We have this trust reposed in us, only during the short, uncertain space that we sojourn here below: only so long as we remain on earth, as this fleeting breath is in our nostrils. The hour is swiftly approaching, it is just at hand, when we can be no longer stewards. The moment the body returns to the

dust as it was, and the spirit to God that gave it, we bear that character no more; the time of our stewardship is at an end. Part of those goods wherewith we were before intrusted, are now come to an end: at least, they are so with regard to us: nor are we longer intrusted with them: and that part which remains, can no longer be employed or improved as it was before.

2. Part of what we were intrusted with before, is at an end, at least with regard to us. What have we to do after this life, with food, and raiment, and houses, and earthly possessions? The food of the dead is the dust of the earth: they are clothed only with worms and rottenness. They dwell in the house prepared for all flesh: their lands know them no more. All their worldly goods are delivered into other hands, and they have no more portion under the sun.

3. The case is the same with regard to the body. The moment the spirit returns to God, we are no longer stewards of this machine, which is then sown in corruption and dishonor. All the parts and members of which it was composed, lie mouldering in the clay. The hands have no longer power to move; the feet have forgot their office; the flesh, sinews, the bones, are all hasting to be dissolved into common dust.

4. Here end also the talents of a mixt nature, our strength, our health, our beauty, our eloquence and address; our faculty of pleasing, of persuading, or convincing others. Here end likewise all the honors we once enjoyed, all the power which was lodged in our hands, all the influence which we once had over others, either by the love or the esteem which they bore us. Our love, our hatred, our desire is perished: none regard how we were once affected toward them. They look upon the dead as neither able to help nor hurt them; so that a living dog is better than a dead lion.

5. Perhaps a doubt may remain concerning some of the other talents wherewith we are now intrusted, whether they will cease to exist when the body returns to dust, or only cease to be improveable. Indeed there is no doubt, but the kind of speech which we now use, by means of these bodily organs, will then be entirely at an end, when those organs are destroyed. It is certain the tongue will no more oc-

case any vibrations in the air: neither will the ear convey these tremulous motions to the common sensory. Even the *sonus exilis*, the low, shrill voice, which the poet supposes to belong to a separate spirit, we cannot allow to have a real being; it is a mere flight of imagination. Indeed it cannot be questioned, but separate spirits have some way to communicate their sentiments to each other: but what inhabitant of flesh and blood can explain that way? What we term speech, they cannot have. So that we can no longer be steward of this talent, when we are numbered with the dead.

6. It may likewise admit of a doubt, whether our senses will exist, when the organs of sense are destroyed. Is it not probable, that those of the lower kind will cease; the feeling, the smell, the taste, as they have a more immediate reference to the body, and are chiefly if not wholly intended for the preservation of it? But will not some kind of sight remain, although the eye be closed in death? And will there not be something in the soul, equivalent to the present sense of hearing? Nay, is it not probable, that these will not only exist in the separate state, but exist in a far greater degree, in a more eminent manner than now! When the soul, disentangled from the clay, is no longer

*“ A dying sparkle in a cloudy place ;”*

when it no longer

*“ Looks thro’ the windows of the eye and ear.”*

But rather is all eye, all ear, all sense in a manner we cannot yet conceive. And have we not a clear proof of the possibility of this, of seeing without the use of the eye, and hearing without the use of the ear? Yea, and an earnest of it continually? For does not the soul see, in the clearest manner, when the eye is of no use, namely, in dreams? Does she not then enjoy the faculty of hearing, without any help from the ear? But however this be, certain it is, that neither will our senses, any more than our speech, be intrusted to us in the manner they are now, when the body lies in the silent grave.

7. How far the knowledge or learning which we have gained by education will then remain, we cannot tell. Sol-

omon indeed says, There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest. But it is evident, these words cannot be understood in an absolute sense. For it is so far from being true, that there is no knowledge after we have quitted the body, that the doubt lies on the other side, whether there be any such thing as real knowledge till then? Whether it be not a plain sober truth, not a mere poetical fiction, That

*All these shadows which for things we take,  
Are but the empty dreams, which in death's sleep we make!*

Only excepting those things which God himself has been pleased to reveal to man. I will speak for one: After having sought for truth with some diligence for half a century, I am at this day hardly sure of any thing, but what I learn from the bible. Nay, I positively affirm, I know nothing else so certainly, that I would dare to stake my salvation upon it.

So much however we may learn from Solomon's words, that there is no such knowledge or wisdom in the grave, as will be of any use to an unhappy spirit; there is no device there, whereby he can now improve those talents, with which he was once intrusted. For time is no more: the time of our trial for everlasting happiness or misery is past. Our day, the day of man is over; the day of salvation is ended. Nothing now remains, but the day of the Lord, ushering in, wide, unchangeable eternity.

3. But still our souls, being incorruptible and immortal, of a nature little lower than the angels, (even if we are to understand that phrase of our original nature, which may well admit of a doubt) when our bodies are mouldered into earth, will remain with all their faculties. Our memory, our understanding will be so far from being destroyed, yea, or impaired by the dissolution of the body, that on the contrary, we have reason to believe, they will be inconceivably strengthened. Have we not the clearest reason to believe, that they will then be wholly freed from those defects, which now naturally result from the union of the soul with the corruptible body? It is highly probable, that from the time these are disunited, our memory will let nothing slip: yea, that it will faithfully exhibit every thing to our view,

which was ever committed to it. It is true, that the invisible world is in scripture termed the land of forgetfulness; or as it is still more strongly expressed in the old translation, the land where all things are forgotten; but by whom? Not by the inhabitants of that land, but by the inhabitants of the earth. It is with regard to them that the unseen world is the land of forgetfulness. All things therein are too frequently forgotten by these: but not by disembodied spirits. From the time they have put off the earthly tabernacle, we can hardly think they forget any thing.

9. In like manner the understanding will doubtless be freed from the defects that are now inseparable from it. For many ages it has been an unquestioned maxim, *Humanum est errare & nescire*: Ignorance and mistake are inseparable from human nature. But the whole of this assertion is only true, with regard to living men, and holds no longer, than while the corruptible body presses down the soul. Ignorance indeed belongs to every finite understanding, seeing there is none beside God that knoweth all things: but do not mistake. When the body is laid aside, this also is laid aside forever.

10. What then can we say of an ingenious man, who has lately made a discovery, that disembodied spirits have not only no senses (not even no sight or hearing) but no memory or understanding, no thought or perception, not so much as a consciousness of their own existence? That they are in a dead sleep from death to the resurrection? *Consanguineus lethi sopor* indeed! Such a sleep we may well call a near kinsman of death, if it be not the same thing. What can we say, but that ingenious men have strange dreams: and those they sometimes mistake for realities.

11. But to return. As the soul will retain its understanding and memory, notwithstanding the dissolution of the body, so undoubtedly the will, including all the affections, will remain in its full vigour. If our love or anger, our hope or desire perish, it is only with regard to those whom we leave behind. To them it matters not, whether they were the objects of our love or hate, of our desire or aversion. But in separate spirits themselves, we have no reason to believe, that any of these are extinguished. It is more probable, that they work with far greater force, than while the soul was clogged with flesh and blood.

12. But although all these, although both our knowledge and senses, our memory and understanding, together with our will, our love, hate, and all our affections, remain after the body is dropt off, yet in this respect they are as though they were not, we are no longer stewards of them. The things continue, but our stewardship does not: we no more act in that capacity. Even the grace which was formerly intrusted with us, in order to enable us to be faithful and wise stewards, is now no longer intrusted for that purpose. The days of our stewardship are ended.

III. 1. It now remains, that being no longer stewards, we give an account of our stewardship. Some have imagined this is to be done immediately after death, as soon as we enter into the world of spirits. Nay, the church of Rome does absolutely assert this; yea, makes it an article of faith. And thus much we may allow, the moment a soul drops the body, and stands naked before God, it cannot but know what its portion will be to all eternity. It will have full in its view, either everlasting joy, or everlasting torment: as it is no longer possible for us to be deceived, in the judgment, which we pass upon ourselves. But the scripture gives us no reason to believe, that God will then sit in judgment upon us. There is no passage in all the oracles of God, which affirms any such thing. That which has been frequently alledged for this purpose, seems rather to prove the contrary: namely, (Heb. ix. 27.) It is appointed for men once to die, and after this, the judgment. For in all reason, the word once is here to be applied to judgment as well as death. So that the fair inference to be drawn from this very text, is, not that there are two judgments, a particular and a general: but that we are to be judged as well as to die, once only: not once immediately after death, and again after the general resurrection; but then only when the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him. The imagination therefore of one judgment at death, and another at the end of the world, can have no place with those who make the written word of God, the whole and sole standard of their faith.

2. The time then when we are to give this account, is when the great white throne comes down from heaven, and he that sitteth thereon, from whose faith the heavens and

the earth flee away, and there is found no place for them. It is then the dead, small and great, will stand before God : and the books will be opened ; the book of scripture, to them who were intrusted therewith, the book of conscience to all mankind. The book of remembrance likewise, (to use another scriptural expression) which had been writing from the foundation of the world, will then be laid open to the view of all the children of men. Before all these, even the whole human race, before the devil and his angels, before an innumerable company of holy angels, and before God the Judge of all : thou wilt appear, without any shelter or covering, without any possibility of disguise, to give a particular account of the manner wherein thou hast employed all thy Lord's goods.

3. The Judge of all will then enquire, " How didst thou employ thy soul ? I intrusted thee with an immortal spirit, endowed with various powers and faculties, with understanding, imagination, memory, will, affections. I gave thee withal full and express directions, how all these were to be employed. Didst thou employ thy understanding, as far as it was capable, according to those directions, namely, in the knowledge of thyself and me ? My nature, my attributes ? My works, whether of creation, of providence, or of grace ? In acquainting thyself with my word ? In using every means to increase thy knowledge thereof ? In meditating thereon day and night ? Didst thou employ thy memory according to my will ? In treasuring up whatever knowledge thou hadst acquired, which might conduce to my glory, to thy own salvation, or to the advantage of others ? Didst thou store up therein, not things of no value, but whatever instruction thou hadst learned from my word : and whatever experience thou hadst gained, of my wisdom, truth, power, and mercy ? Was thy imagination employed, not in painting vain images, much less such as nourished foolish and hurtful desires, but in representing to thee whatever would profit thy soul, and awaken thy pursuit of wisdom and holiness ? Didst thou follow my directions with regard to thy will ? ——— Was it wholly given up to me ? ——— Was it swallowed up in mine, so as never to oppose, but always run parallel with it ? Were thy affections placed and regulated in such a manner as I appointed in my word ? Didst thou give me thy heart ?

Didst thou not love the world, neither the things of the world? Was I the object of thy love? Was all thy desire unto me, and unto the remembrance of my name? Was I the joy of thy heart, the delight of thy soul, the chief among ten thousand? Didst thou sorrow for nothing but what grieved my Spirit? Didst thou fear and hate nothing but sin? Did the whole stream of thy affections flow back to the ocean from whence they came? Were thy thoughts employed according to my will? Not in ranging to the ends of the earth, not on folly, or sin: but on whatsoever things were pure, whatsoever things were holy, on whatsoever was conducive to my glory, and to peace and goodwill among men?"

4. The Lord will then enquire, "How didst thou employ the body wherewith I intrusted thee? I gave thee a tongue, to praise me therewith: didst thou use it to the end for which it was given? Didst thou employ it, not in evil speaking, not in uncharitable or unprofitable conversation: but in such as was good, as was necessary or useful, either to thyself or others? Such as always tended, directly or indirectly, to minister grace to the hearers? I gave thee together with thy other senses, those grand avenues of knowledge, sight and hearing: were these employed to those excellent purposes for which they were bestowed upon thee? In bringing thee in more and more instruction in righteousness and true holiness? I gave thee hands and feet and various members wherewith to perform the works which were prepared for thee: were they employed, not in doing the will of the flesh, of thy evil nature, or the will of the mind, (the things to which thy reason or fancy led thee,) but the will of him that sent thee into the world, merely to work out thy own salvation? Didst thou present all thy members, not to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but to me alone, through the Son of my love, as instruments of righteousness?"

5. The Lord of all will next enquire, "How didst thou employ the worldly goods which I lodged in thy hands? Didst thou use thy food, not so as to seek or place thy happiness therein, but so as to preserve the body in health, in strength, and vigour, a fit instrument for the soul? Didst thou use apparel, not to nourish pride or vanity, much less to tempt others to sin, but conveniently and decently to de-



send thyself from the injuries of the weather? Didst thou prepare and use thy house and all other conveniences, with a single eye to my glory? In every point seeking not thy own honour, but mine: studying to please not thyself, but me? Once more: in what manner didst thou employ that comprehensive talent, money? Not in gratifying the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life? Not squandering it away in vain expenses, the same as throwing it into the sea; not hoarding it up to leave behind thee, the same as burying it in the earth? But first supplying thy own reasonable wants, together with those of thy family: then restoring the remainder to me, through the poor, whom I had appointed to receive it: looking upon thyself as only one of that number of poor, whose wants were to be supplied out of that part of my substance, which I had placed in thy hands for this purpose: leaving thee the right of being supplied first, and the blessedness of giving rather than receiving? Wast thou accordingly a general benefactor to mankind: feeding the hungry, cloathing the naked, comforting the sick, assisting the stranger, relieving the afflicted, according to their various necessities? Wast thou eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; a father to the fatherless, and an husband to the widow? And didst thou labour to improve all outward works of mercy, as means of saving souls from death?"

6. Thy Lord will farther enquire, "Hast thou been a wise and faithful steward, with regard to the talents of a mixt nature which I lent thee? Didst thou employ thy health and strength, not in folly or sin, not in the pleasures which perished in the using, not in making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the desires thereof, but in a vigorous pursuit of the better part, which none could take away from thee? Didst thou employ whatever was pleasing in thy person or address, whatever advantages thou hadst by education, whatever share of learning, whatever knowledge of things or men was committed to thee, for the promoting of virtue in the world, for the enlargement of my kingdom? Didst thou employ whatever share of power thou hadst, whatever influence over others, by the love or esteem of thee which they had conceived, for the increse of their wisdom and holiness? Didst thou employ that inestimable talent of time, with wariness and circumspection, as du-

ly weighing the value of every moment, and knowing that all were numbered in eternity? Above all, Wast thou a good steward of my grace, preventing, accompanying, and following thee? Didst thou duly observe and carefully improve all the influences of my Spirit? Every good desire; every measure of light; all his sharp or gentle reproofs? How didst thou profit by the spirit of bondage and fear, which was previous to the spirit of adoption? And when thou wast made a partaker of this spirit, crying in thy heart Abba, Father, didst thou stand fast in the glorious liberty wherewith I made thee free? Didst thou from thenceforth present thy soul and body, all thy thoughts, thy words and actions, in one flame of love, as an holy sacrifice, glorifying me with thy body and thy spirit? Then, Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." And what will remain either to the faithful or unfaithful steward? Nothing but the execution of that sentence, which has been passed by the righteous Judge; fixing thee in a state which admits of no change, through everlasting ages. It remains only, that thou be rewarded to all eternity, according to thy works.

IV. 1. From these plain considerations we may learn, first, How important is this short, uncertain day of life! How precious, above all utterance, above all conception, is every portion of it!

*"The least of these a serious care demands:*

*"For tho' they're little, they are golden sands!"*

How deeply does it concern every child of man, to let none of these run to waste; but to improve them all to the noblest purposes, as long as the breath of God is in his nostrils!

2. We learn from hence, secondly, That there is no employment of our time, no action or conversation that is purely indifferent. All is good or bad, because all our time, as every thing we have, is not our own. All these are, as our Lord speaks, *ta allotria*, the property of another: of God, our Creator. Now these either are, or are not employed, according to his will. If they are so employed, all is good; if they are not, all is evil. Again: It is his will, that we should continually grow in grace, and in the

living knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently, every thought, word, and work whereby this knowledge is increased, whereby we grow in grace, is good : and every one whereby this knowledge is not increased, is truly and properly evil.

3. We learn from hence, thirdly, That there are no works of supererogation ; that we can never do more than our duty : seeing all we have is not our own, but God's, all we can do is due to him. We have not received this or that, or many things only, but every thing from him : therefore every thing is his due. He that gives us all, must needs have a right to all. So that if we pay him any thing less than all, we cannot be faithful stewards. And considering every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour, we cannot be wise stewards, unless we labour to the uttermost of our power : not leaving any thing undone, which we possibly can do, but putting forth all our strength.

4. Brethren. Who is an understanding man, and endued with knowledge among you ? Let him shew the wisdom from above, by walking suitably to his character. If he so account of himself, as a steward of the manifold gifts of God, let him see that all his thoughts, and words, and works be agreeable to the post God has assigned him. It requires all your wisdom, all your resolution, all your patience and constancy : for more than ever you had by nature ; but not more than you may have by grace. For his grace is sufficient for you, and all things, you know, are possible to him that believeth. By faith then, put on the Lord Jesus Christ ; put on the whole armour of God, and you shall be enabled to glorify him in all your words and works, yea, to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

EDINBURGH, *May 14, 1768.*

## SERMON XX.

ON THE DEATH OF THE REV. MR.  
G. WHITEFIELD.\*

NUMBERS xxiii. 10.

*Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!*

1. **L**ET my last end be like his! How many of you join in this wish? Perhaps there are few of you who do not, even in this numerous congregation. And O that this wish may rest upon your minds! That it may not die away, till your souls also are lodged "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest!"

2. An elaborate exposition of the text, will not be expected on this occasion. It would detain you too long from the sadly-pleasing thought of your beloved brother, friend, and pastor; yea, and father too: for how many are here whom he hath begotten in the Lord? Will it not then be more suitable to your inclinations, as well as to this solemnity, directly to speak of this man of God, whom you have so often heard speaking in this place? The end of whose conversation ye know, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

And may we not,

First, Observe a few particulars of his life and death.

Secondly, Take some view of his character. And,

Thirdly, Inquire how we may improve this awful providence, his sudden removal from us.

I. 1. We may, in the first place, observe a few particulars of his life and death. He was born at Gloucester, in

\* Preached at the Chapel in Tottenham-Court-Road, and at the Tabernacle near Moorfields, Sunday, Nov. 18, 1770.

December, 1714, and put to a grammar-school there, when about twelve years old. When he was seventeen he began to be seriously religious, and served God to the best of his knowledge. About eighteen he removed to the university, and was admitted at Pembroke College in Oxford. And about a year after, he became acquainted with the Methodists, (so called) whom from that time he loved as his own soul.

2. By them he was convinced, that we must be born again, or outward religion will profit us nothing. He joined with them in fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays, in visiting the sick and the prisoners, and in gathering up the very fragments of time, that no moment might be lost. And he changed the course of his studies, reading chiefly such books as entered into the heart of religion, and led directly to an experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

3. He was soon tried as with fire. Not only his reputation was lost, and some of his dearest friends forsook him : but he was exercised with inward trials, and those of the severest kind. Many nights he lay sleepless upon his bed : many days prostrate on the ground. But after he had groaned several months under the Spirit of bondage, God was pleased to remove the heavy load, by giving him the Spirit of adoption, enabling him, through a living faith, to lay hold on the Son of his love.

4. However, it was thought needful, for the recovery of his health, which was much impaired, that he should go into the country. He accordingly went to Gloucester, where God enabled him to awaken several young persons. These soon formed themselves into a little society, and were some of the first fruits of his labour. Shortly after he began to read twice or thrice a week to some poor people in the town, and every day to read to, and pray with the prisoners in the county goal.

5. Being now about twenty-one years of age, he was solicited to enter into holy orders. Of this he was greatly afraid, being deeply sensible of his own insufficiency. But the bishop himself sending for him, and telling him, "Tho' I had purposed to ordain none under three and twenty, yet I will ordain you whenever you come;" and several other providential circumstances concurring, he submitted, and

was ordained on Trinity-Sunday, 1736. The next Sunday he preached to a crowded auditory, in the church wherein he was baptized. The week following he returned to Oxford, and took his Bachelor's degree. And he was now fully employed, the care of the prisoners and the poor lying chiefly on him.

6. But it was not long before he was invited to London, to serve the cure of a friend going into the country. He continued there two months, lodging in the Tower, reading prayers in the chapel twice a week, catechizing and preaching once, beside daily visiting the soldiers in the barracks and the infirmary. He also read prayers every evening at Wapping-Chapel, and preached at Ludgate-prison every Tuesday. While he was here, letters came from his friends in Georgia, which made him long to go and help them. But not seeing his call clear, at the appointed time he returned to his little charge at Oxford; where several youths met daily at his room, to build up each other in their most holy faith.

7. But he was quickly called from hence again to supply the cure of Dummer in Hampshire. Here he read prayers twice a day, early in the morning, and in the evening, after the people came from work. He also daily catechized the children, and visited from house to house. He now divided the day into three parts, allotting eight hours for sleep and meals, eight for study and retirement, and eight for reading prayers, catechizing, and visiting the people. Is there a more excellent way for a servant of Christ and his church? If not, Who will go and do likewise?

8. Yet his mind still ran on going abroad. And being now fully convinced he was called of God thereto, he set all things in order, and in January 1737, went down to take leave of his friends in Gloucester. It was in this journey that God began to bless his ministry in an uncommon manner. Wherever he preached, amazing multitudes of hearers flocked together, in Gloucester, in Stonehouse, in Bath, in Bristol: so that the heat of the churches was scarce supportable. And the impressions made on the minds of many, were no less extraordinary. After his return to London, while he was detained by general Oglethorpe, from week to week, and from month to month, it pleased God to bless his word still more. And he was indefatiga-

ble in his labour: generally on Sunday he preached four times, to exceeding large auditories; beside reading prayers twice or thrice, and walking to and fro, often ten or twelve miles.

9. On December 28, he left London. It was on the 29th that he first preached without notes. December 30, he went on board; but it was above a month before they cleared the land. One happy effect of their very slow passage, he mentions in April following: "Blessed be God, we now live very comfortably in the great cabbin. We talk of little else but God and Christ: and scarce a word is heard among us when together, but what has reference to our fall in the first, and our new birth in the second Adam." It seems likewise to have been a peculiar providence, that he should spend a little time at Gibraltar: where both citizens and soldiers, high and low, young and old, acknowledged the day of their visitation.

10. From Sunday, May 7, 1738, till the latter end of August following, he made full proof of his ministry in Georgia, particularly at Savannah; he read prayers and expounded twice a day and visited the sick daily. On Sunday he expounded at five in the morning; at ten read prayers and preached, and at three in the afternoon: and at seven in the evening expounded the church catechism. How much easier it is for our brethren in the ministry, either in England, Scotland, or Ireland, to find fault with such a labourer in our Lord's vineyard, than to tread in his steps?

11. It was now that he observed the deplorable condition of many children here; and that God put into his heart the first thought of founding an Orphan-house: for which he determined to raise contributions in England, if God should give him a safe return thither. In December following he did return to London: and on Sunday, January the 14th, 1739, he was ordained priest at Christ-Church, Oxford. The next day he came to London again: and on Sunday the 21st preached twice. But though the churches were large, and crowded exceedingly, yet many hundreds stood in the church yard, and hundreds more returned home. This put him upon the first thought of preaching in the open air. But when he mentioned it to some of his friends, they judged it to be mere madness. So he did not carry it into execution, till after he had left London. It

was on Wednesday, February 21, that finding all the church doors to be shut in Bristol, (beside that no church was able to contain one half of the congregation) at three in the afternoon he went to Kingswood, and preached abroad to near two thousand people. On Friday he preached there to four or five thousand; and on Sunday to (it was supposed) ten thousand. The number continually increased all the time he stayed at Bristol. And a flame of holy love was kindled, which will not easily be put out. The same was afterwards kindled in various parts of Wales, of Gloucestershire, and Worcestershire. Indeed wherever he went, God abundantly confirmed the word of his messenger.

12. On Sunday, April 29, he preached the first time in Moorfields, and on Kensington-common. And the thousands of hearers were as quiet as they could have been in a church. Being again detained in England from month to month, he made little excursions into several counties, and received the contributions of willing multitudes, for an Orphan-house in Georgia. The embargo which was now laid on the shipping, gave him leisure for more journies, through various parts of England, for which many will have reason to bless God to all eternity. At length, on August 14, he embarked. But he did not land in Pennsylvania till October 30. Afterwards he went through Pennsylvania, the Jerseys, New-York, Maryland, Virginia, North and S. Carolina, preaching all along to immense congregations, with full as great effect as in England: on Jan. 10, 1740, he arrived at Savannah.

13. January 29, he added three desolate orphans to near twenty which he had in his house before. The next day he laid out the ground for the house, about ten miles from Savannah. February 11, he took in four orphans more, and set out for Frederica, in order to fetch orphans that were in the southern parts of the colony. In his return he fixt a school, both for children and grown persons, at Darien, and took four orphans thence. March 25, he laid the first stone of the Orphan-house, to which, with great propriety, he gave the name of Bethesda: a work for which the children yet unborn shall praise the Lord. He had now about forty orphans, so that there were near an hundred mouths to be fed daily. But he was careful for nothing, casting his care on him who feedeth the young ravens that call upon him.



14. In April he made another tour through Pennsylvania, the Jerseys, and New-York. Incredible multitudes flocked to hear, among whom were abundance of negroes. In all places the greater part of the hearers were affected to an amazing degree. Many were deeply convinced of their lost state; many truly converted to God. In some places thousands cried out aloud; many as in the agonies of death; others were wringing their hands; others lying on the ground; others sinking into the arms of their friends; almost all lifting up their eyes, and calling for mercy.

15. He returned to Savannah, June 5. The next evening, during the public service, the whole congregation, young and old, were dissolved into tears. After service, several of the parishoners, and all his family, particularly the little children, returned home crying along the streets, and some could not help praying aloud. The groans and cries of the children continued all night, and great part of the next day.

16. In August he set out again, and through various provinces came to Boston. While he was here, and in the neighbouring places, he was extremely weak in body. Yet the multitudes of hearers were so great, and the effects wrought on them so astonishing, as the oldest man then alive in the town had never seen before. The same power attended his preaching at New-York; particularly on Sunday, November 2. Almost as soon as he began, crying, weeping, and wailing, were to be heard on every side. Many sunk down to the ground, cut to the heart: and many were filled with divine consolation. Toward the close of his journey he made this reflection: "It is the seventy-fifth day since I arrived at Rhode-Island, exceeding weak in body. Yet God has enabled me to preach an hundred and seventy-five times in public, beside exhorting frequently in private. Never did God vouchsafe me greater comforts: never did I perform my journies with less fatigue, or see such a continuance of the divine presence in the congregations to whom I preached." In December he returned to Savannah, and in the March following arrived in England.

17. You may easily observe, that the preceding account is chiefly extracted from his own journals, which, for their artless and unaffected simplicity, may vie with any writings

of the kind. And how exact a specimen is this of his labours both in Europe and America, for the honour of his beloved Master, during the thirty years that followed! As well as of the uninterrupted shower of blessings wherewith God was pleased to succeed his labours! Is it not much to be lamented, that any thing should have prevented his continuing this account, till at least near the time when he was called by his Lord to enjoy the fruit of his labour? If he has left any papers of this kind, and his friends account me worthy of the honour, it would be my glory and joy to methodize, transcribe, and prepare them for the public view.

18. A particular account of the last scene of his life is thus given by a gentleman of Boston: "After being about a month with us in Boston and its vicinity, and preaching every day, he went to Old-York, preached on Thursday, September 27, there: proceeded to Portsmouth, and preached there on Friday. On Saturday morning he set out for Boston: but before he came to Newbury, where he had engaged to preach the next morning, he was importuned to preach by the way. The house not being large enough to contain the people, he preached in an open field. But having been infirm for several weeks, this so exhausted his strength, that when he came to Newbury, he could not get out of the ferry-boat without the help of two men. In the evening, however, he recovered his spirits, and appeared with his usual cheerfulness. He went to his chamber at nine, his fixt time, which no company could divert him from: and slept better than he had done for some weeks before. He rose at four in the morning, September 30, and went into his closet; and his companion observed he was unusually long in private. He left his closet, returned to his companion, threw himself on the bed, and lay about ten minutes. Then he fell upon his knees, prayed most fervently to God, "That if it was consistent with his will he might that day finish his Master's work." He then desired his man to call Mr. Parsons, the clergyman, at whose house he was: but in a minute, before Mr. Parsons could reach him, he died without a sigh or groan. On the news of his death, six gentlemen set out for Newbury in order to bring his remains hither, but he

“ could not be moved, so that his precious ashes must re-  
 “ main at Newbury. Hundreds would have gone from  
 “ this town to attend his funeral, had they not expected he  
 “ would have been interred hither. May this stroke be  
 “ sanctified to the church of God in general, and to this  
 “ province in particular !”

II. 1. We are in the second place, to take some view  
 of his character. A little sketch of this was, soon after,  
 published in the Boston Gazette: an extract of which is  
 subjoined: “ In his public labours he has for many years  
 “ astonished the world with his eloquence and devotion.  
 “ With what divine pathos did he persuade the impenitent  
 “ sinner to embrace the practice of piety and virtue ! He  
 “ spoke from the heart, and with a fervency of zeal, per-  
 “ haps unequalled since the days of the apostles. From  
 “ the pulpit he was unrivalled in the command of an ever-  
 “ crowded auditory. Nor was he less agreeable and in-  
 “ structive in his private conversation: happy in a remark-  
 “ able ease of address, willing to communicate, studious  
 “ to edify. May the rising generation catch a spark of  
 “ that flame which shone with such distinguished lustre in  
 “ the spirit and practice of this faithful servant of the most  
 “ high God !”

2. A more particular and equally just character of him,  
 has appeared in one of the English papers. It may not be  
 disagreeable to you to add the substance of this likewise :  
 “ The character of this truly pious person, must be im-  
 “ prest on the heart of every friend to vital religion. In  
 “ spite of a tender constitution, he continued, to the last  
 “ day of his life, preaching with a frequency and fervor,  
 “ that seemed to exceed the natural strength of the most  
 “ robust. Being called to the exercise of his function at  
 “ an age, when most young men are only beginning to qua-  
 “ lify themselves for it, he had not time to make a very  
 “ considerable progress in the learned languages. But  
 “ this defect was amply supplied, by a lively and fertile  
 “ genius, by fervent zeal, and by a forcible and most per-  
 “ suasive delivery. And though in the pulpit he often  
 “ found it needful, by the terrors of the Lord to persuade  
 “ men, he had nothing gloomy in his nature, being singu-  
 “ larly cheerful, as well as charitable and tender-hearted.

“ He was as ready to relieve the bodily as the spiritual necessities of those that applied to him. It ought also to be observed, that he constantly enforced upon his audience every moral duty, particularly industry in their several callings, and obedience to their superiors. He endeavoured, by the most extraordinary efforts, of preaching in different places, and even in the open fields, to rouse the lower class of people, from the last degree of inattention and ignorance, to a sense of religion. For this, and his other labours, the name of George Whitefield, will long be remembered with esteem and veneration.”

3. That both these accounts are just and impartial, will readily be allowed ; that is, as far as they go. But they go little farther than the outside of his character. They shew you the preacher, but not the man, the Christian, the saint of God. May I be permitted to add a little on this head, from a personal knowledge of near forty years? Indeed, I am thoroughly sensible how difficult it is to speak on so delicate a subject ; what prudence is required to avoid both extremes, to say neither too little, nor too much? Nay, I know it is impossible to speak to all, to say either less or more, without incurring from some the former, from others the latter censure. Some will seriously think, that too little is said ; and others, that it is too much. But without attending to this, I will speak just what I know, before him to whom we are all to give an account.

4. Mention has already been made of his unparalleled zeal, his indefatigable activity, his tender-heartedness to the afflicted, and charitableness toward the poor. But should we not likewise mention his deep gratitude, to all whom God had used as instruments of good to him? Of whom he did not cease to speak in the most respectful manner, even to his dying day. Should we not mention, that he had an heart susceptible of the most generous and the most tender friendship? I have frequently thought, that this, of all others, was the distinguishing part of his character. How few have we known of so kind a temper, of such large and flowing affections? Was it not principally by this, that the hearts of others were so strangely drawn and knit to him? Can any thing but love beget love?— This shone in his very countenance, and continually breaths

ed in all his words, whether in public or private. Was it not this, which, quick and penetrating as lightning, flew from heart to heart? Which gave that life to his sermons, his conversations, his letters? Ye are witnesses.

5. But away with the vile misconstruction of men of corrupt minds, who know of no love but what is earthly and sensual. Be it remembered, at the same time, that he was endued with the most nice and unblemished modesty. His office called him to converse very frequently and largely, with women as well as men; and those of every age and condition. But his whole behaviour toward them, was a practical comment on that advice of St. Paul to Timothy, Intreat the elder women as mothers, the younger as sisters, with all purity.

6. Mean time, how suitable to the friendliness of his spirit, was the frankness and openness of his conversation? Although it was as far removed from rudeness on the one hand, as from guile and disguise on the other. Was not this frankness at once a fruit and a proof of his courage and intrepidity? Armed with these, he feared not the faces of men, but used great plainness of speech to persons of every rank and condition, high and low, rich and poor: endeavouring only by manifestation of the truth, to commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

7. Neither was he afraid of labour or pain, any more than of what man could do unto him, being equally

*“ Patient in bearing ill and doing well.”*

And this appeared in the steadiness wherewith he pursued whatever he undertook for his Master's sake. Witness one instance for all, the Orphan-house in Georgia, which he began and perfected, in spite of all discouragements. Indeed, in whatever concerned himself, he was pliant and flexible. In this case he was easy to be intreated, easy to be either convinced or persuaded. But he was immoveable in the things of God, or wherever his conscience was concerned. None could persuade, any more than affright him, to vary in the least point from that integrity, which was inseparable from his whole character, and regulated all his words and actions. Herein he did

*“Stand as an iron pillar strong,  
And stedfast as a wall of brass.”*

8. If it be inquired, What was the foundation of this integrity, courage, patience, and every other valuable and amiable quality; it is easy to give the answer. It was not the excellence of his natural temper; not the strength of his understanding; it was not the force of education: no, nor the advice of his friends. It was no other than faith in a bleeding Lord; Faith of the operation of God. It was a lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away. It was the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, which was given unto him, filling his soul with tender, disinterested love to every child of man. From this source arose that torrent of eloquence which frequently bore down all before it: from this, that astonishing force of persuasion, which the most hardened sinners could not resist.— — — This it was, which often made his head as waters, and his eyes a fountain of tears. This it was, which enabled him to pour out his soul in prayer, in a manner peculiar to himself, with such fulness and ease united together, with such strength and variety both of sentiment and expression.

9. I may close this head with observing, What an honour it pleased God to put upon his faithful servant, by allowing him to declare his everlasting gospel in so many various countries, to such numbers of people, and with so great an effect, on so many of their precious souls! Have we read or heard of any persons since the apostles, who testified the gospel of the grace of God, through so widely extended a space, through so large a part of the habitable world? Have we read or heard of any person who called so many thousands, so many myriads of sinners to repentance? Above all; have we read or heard of any, who has been a blessed instrument in his hand of bringing so many sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God? It is true, were we to talk thus to the gay world, we should be judged to speak as barbarians. But you understand the language of the country to which you are going, and whither our dear friend is gone a little before us.

III. But how shall we improve this awful providence? This is the third thing which we have to consider. And the answer to this important question is easy: (may God write it in all our hearts!) By keeping close to the grand doctrines which he delivered: and by drinking into his Spirit.

1. And first, let us keep close to the grand scriptural doctrines, which he every where delivered. There are many doctrines of a less essential nature, with regard to which even the sincere children of God (such is the present weakness of human understanding!) are and have been divided for many ages. In these we may think and let think; we may "agree to disagree." But mean time let us hold fast the essentials of the faith, which was once delivered to the saints; and which this champion of God so strongly insisted on, at all times, and in all places.

2. His fundamental point was, Give God all the glory of whatever is good in man. And in the business of salvation, Set Christ as high, and man as low as possible.—With this point, he and his friends at Oxford, the original Methodists (so called) set out. Their grand principle was, There is no power (by nature) and no merit in man. They insisted, all power to think, speak, or act right, is in and from the Spirit of Christ: and all merit is (not in man, how high soever in grace, but merely) in the blood of Christ. So he and they taught: There is no power in man, till it is given him from above, to do one good work, to speak one good word, or to form one good desire. For it is not enough to say, all men are sick of sin: no, we are all dead in trespasses and sins. It follows, that all the children of men are by nature children of wrath. We are all guilty before God, liable to death temporal and eternal.

3. And we are all helpless, both with regard to the power and to the guilt of sin. For who can bring a cleansing out of an unclean? None less than the Almighty. Who can raise those that are dead, spiriually dead in sin? None but he who raised us from the dust of the earth. But on what consideration will he do this? Not for works of righteousness that we have done. The dead cannot praise thee, O Lord! Nor do any thing for the sake of which they should be raised to life. Whatever therefore God does, he does it merely for the sake of his well beloved

Son: he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. He himself bore all our sins in his own body upon the tree. He was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification. He then is the sole meritorious cause of every blessing we do or can enjoy: in particular of our pardon and acceptance with God, of our full and free justification. But by what means do we become interested in what Christ has done and suffered? Not by works, lest any man should boast; but by faith alone. We conclude, says the apostle, that a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law. And to as many as thus receive him, giveth he power to become the sons of God: even to those that believe in his name, who are born, not of the will of man, but of God.

4. And except a man be thus born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. But all who are thus born of the Spirit, have the kingdom of God within them. Christ sets up his kingdom in their hearts; Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. That mind is in them, which was in Christ Jesus, enabling them to walk as Christ also walked. His indwelling Spirit makes them both holy in heart, and holy in all manner of conversation. But still, seeing all this is a free gift, through the righteousness and blood of Christ, there is eternally the same reason to remember, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

5. You are not ignorant, that these are the fundamental doctrines which he every where insisted on. And may they not be summed up, as it were, in two words, The new birth, and justification by faith? These let us insist upon with all boldness, at all times, and in all places: in public, (those of us who are called thereto) and at all opportunities, in private. Keep close to these good, old, unfashionable doctrines, how many soever contradict and blaspheme. Go on, my brethren, in the name of the Lord, and in the power of his might. With all care and diligence, keep that safe which is committed to your trust: knowing that heaven and earth shall pass away; but this truth shall not pass away.

6. But will it be sufficient, to keep close to his doctrines, how pure soever they are? Is there not a point of still greater importance than this, namely, to drink into his spirit? Herein to be a follower of him, even as he was of



Christ! Without this, the purity of our doctrines would only increase our condemnation. This therefore is the principal thing, to copy after his spirit. And allowing that in some points, we must be content, to admire what we cannot imitate: yet in many others we may, through the same free grace, be partakers of the same blessing. Conscious then of your own wants, and of his bounteous love, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not, cry to him that worketh all in all, for a measure of the same precious faith; of the same zeal and activity, the same tender-heartedness, charitableness, bowels of mercies. Wrestle with God for some degree of the same grateful, friendly, affectionate temper: of the same openness, simplicity, and godly sincerity. Love without dissimulation. Wrestle on, till the power from on high works in you the same steady courage and patience: and above all, because it is the crown of all, the same invariable integrity.

7. Is there any other fruit of the grace of God, with which he was eminently endowed, and the want of which among the children of God he frequently and passionately lamented? There is one, that is, Catholic love: that sincere and tender affection, which is due to all those, who, we have reason to believe, are children of God by faith: in other words, all those in every persuasion, who fear God and work righteousness. He longed to see all who had tasted of the good word, of a truly Catholic spirit, (a word little understood, and still less experienced by many, who have it frequently in their mouth.) Who is he that answers this character? Who is a man of a Catholic spirit? One who loves as friends, as brethren in the Lord, as joint partakers in the present kingdom of heaven, and fellow-heirs of his eternal kingdom, all of whatever opinion, mode of worship, or congregation, who believe in the Lord Jesus; who love God and man: who rejoicing to please, and fearing to offend God, are careful to abstain from evil, and zealous of good works. He is a man of a truly Catholic spirit, who bears all these continually upon his heart; who having an unspeakable tenderness for their persons, and an earnest desire of their welfare, does not cease to commend them to God in prayer, as well as to plead their cause before men: who speaks comfortably to them, and labours by all his words, to strengthen their hands in God. He assists

them to the uttermost of His power, in all things, spiritual and temporal. He is ready to spend and to be spent for them; yea, to lay down his life for his brethren.

8. How amiable a character is this? How desirable to every child of God! But why is it then so rarely found? How is it, that there are so few instances of it? Indeed, supposing we have tasted of the love of God, how can any of us rest, till it is our own? Why, there is a delicate device, whereby Satan persuades thousands, that they may stop short of it, and yet be guiltless. It is well, if many here present are not in this snare of the devil, taken captive at his will. "O yes, says one, I have all this love for those I believe to be children of God. But I will never believe, he is a child of God, who belongs to that vile congregation! Can he, do you think, be a child of God, who holds such detestable opinions? Or he that joins in such senseless and superstitious, if not idolatrous worship?" So we justify ourselves in one sin, by adding a second to it! We excuse the want of love in ourselves, by laying the blame on others. To colour our own devilish temper, we pronounce our brethren children of the devil. O beware of this! And if you are already taken in the snare, escape out of it as soon as possible. Go and learn that truly Catholic love, which is not rash or hasty in judging: that love which thinketh no evil, which believeth and hopeth all things: which makes all the allowances for others, that we desire others should make for us. Then we shall take knowledge of the grace of God, which is in every man, whatever be his opinion or mode of worship. Then will all that fear God be near and dear unto us, in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

9. Was not this the spirit of our dear friend? And why should it not be ours? O thou God of love, how long shall thy people be a bye-word among the Heathen? How long shall they laugh us to scorn, and say, "See how these Christians love one another!" When wilt thou roll away our reproach? Shall the sword devour for ever? How long will it be, ere thou bid thy people return from following each other? Now at least, let all the people stand still, and pursue after their brethren no more! But whatever others do, let all of us, my brethren, hear the voice of him that being dead yet speaketh! Suppose ye hear him say, "Now, a

“ least, be ye followers of me as I was of Christ! Let  
 “ brother no more lift up sword againt brother, neither  
 “ know ye war any more! Rather put ye on, as the elect  
 “ of God, bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, bro-  
 “ therly kindness, gentleness, long suffering, forbearing one  
 “ another in love. Let the time past suffice for strife, en-  
 “ vy, contention; for biting and devouring one another.  
 “ Blessed be God, that ye have not long ago been consu-  
 “ med one of another! From henceforth hold ye the uni-  
 “ ty of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

10. O God, with thee no word is impossible: thou dost  
 whatsoever pleaseth thee! O that thou wouldst cause the  
 mantle of thy prophet, whom thou hast taken up, now to  
 fall upon us that remain! Where is the Lord God of E-  
 lijah? Let his spirit rest upon these thy servants! Shew  
 thou art the God that answerest by fire! Let the fire of  
 thy love fall on every heart! And because we love thee, let  
 us love one another with a love stronger than death. Take  
 away from us all anger, and wrath, and bitterness: all cla-  
 mour and evil-speaking. Let thy Spirit so rest upon us,  
 that from this hour, we may be kind to each other, tender-  
 hearted: forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's  
 sake, hath forgiven us!

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### *A N H Y M N.*

**S**ERVANT of God, well done!  
 Thy glorious warfare's past,  
 The battle's fought, the race is wón,  
 And thou art crown'd at last;  
 Of all thy heart's desire  
 Triumphantly possést,  
 Lodg'd by the ministerial quire  
 In thy Redeemer's breast.

In condescending love  
 Thy ceaseless prayer He heard,  
 And bad thee suddenly remove,  
 To thy complete reward;

Ready to bring the peace,  
 Thy beauteous feet were shod,  
 When mercy sign'd thy soul's release  
 And caught thee up to God.

With saints inthron'd on high  
 Thou dost thy Lord proclaim,  
 And still to God salvation cry,  
 Salvation to the Lamb!  
 O happy, happy soul!  
 In extacies of praise,  
 Long as eternal ages roll,  
 Thou seest thy Saviour's face.

Redeem'd from earth and pain,  
 Ah! when shall we ascend,  
 And all in Jesus' presence reign  
 With our translated Friend!  
 Come, Lord, and quickly come!  
 And when in Thee complete,  
 Receive thy longing servants home,  
 To triumph at thy feet!

## SERMON XXI.

## THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

## DISCOURSE I.

ROMANS viii. 16.

*Thy Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God.*

1. **H**OW many vain men, not understanding what they spake, neither whereof they affirmed, have wrested this scripture, to the great loss, if not the destruction, of their souls? How many have mistaken the voice of their own imagination, for the witness of the Spirit of God? And thence idly presumed, they were the children of God, while they were doing the works of the devil? These are truly and properly Enthusiasts; and indeed in the worst sense of the word. But with what difficulty are they convinced thereof? Especially, if they have drank deep into that spirit of error. All endeavours to bring them to the knowledge of themselves, they will then account fighting against God. And that vehemence and impetuosity of spirit, which they call contending earnestly for the faith, sets them so far above all the usual methods of conviction, that we may well say, With men it is impossible.

2. Who can then be surprised, if many reasonable men, seeing the dreadful effects of this delusion, and labouring to keep at the utmost distance from it, should sometimes lean toward another extreme? — If they are not forward to believe any who speak of having this witness, concerning which others have so grievously erred? If they are almost ready, to set all down for enthusiasts, who use the expressions which have been so terribly abused. Yea, if they should question, whether the witness or testimony here spoken of, be the privilege of ordinary Christians, and not rather, one of those extraordinary gifts, which they suppose belonged only to the apostolic age.

3. But is there any necessity laid upon us, of running either into one extreme or the other? May we not steer

a middle course? Keep a sufficient distance from that spirit of error and enthusiasm, without denying the gift of God, and giving up the great privilege of his children? Surely we may. In order thereto, let us consider, in the presence and fear of God,

First, What is this witness or testimony of our Spirit? What is the testimony of God's Spirit? And how does he bear witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God?

Secondly, How is this joint testimony of God's Spirit and our own, clearly and solidly distinguished, from the presumption of a natural mind? and from the delusion of the devil?

I. 1. Let us first consider, what is the witness or testimony of our spirit. But here I cannot but desire all those who are for swallowing up the testimony of the Spirit of God, in the rational testimony of our own spirit, to observe, that in this text the apostle is so far from speaking of the testimony of our own spirit only, that it may be questioned whether he speaks of it at all. Whether he does not speak only of the testimony of God's Spirit? It does not appear but the original text may be fairly understood thus: The apostle had just said, in the preceding verse, Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father! and immediately subjoins *Auto to pneuma* (some copies read *to auto pneuma*) *summarturei to pneumati emon, oti esmen taken Theou.* Which may be translated, The same spirit beareth witness to our spirit, that we are the children of God (the preposition *bum* only denoting, that he witnesses this at the same time that he enables us to cry Abba, Father!) But I contend not; seeing so many other texts, with the experience of all real Christians, sufficiently evince, that there is, in every believer, both the testimony of God's Spirit, and the testimony of his own, that he is a child of God.

2. With regard to the latter, the foundation thereof is laid in those numerous texts of scripture, which describe the marks of the children of God, and that so plain that he which runneth may read them. These are also collected together, and placed in the strongest light, by many both

ancient and modern writers. If any need farther light, he may receive it by attending on the ministry of God's word; by meditating thereon before God in secret, and by conversing with those who have the knowledge of his ways. And by the reason or understanding that God has given him (which religion was designed not to extinguish, but to perfect; according to that of the apostle, "Brethren, be not children in understanding; in malice (or wickedness) be ye children; but in understanding be ye men." 1 Cor. xiv. 20.) Every man applying these scriptural marks to himself, may know, whether he is a child of God. Thus if he know, first, as many as are led by the Spirit of God, into all holy tempers and actions, they are the sons of God, (for which he has the infallible assurance of holy writ;) secondly, I am thus led by the Spirit of God: he may easily conclude, therefore, I am a son of God.

3. Agreeable to this are all those plain declaration of St. John in his first epistle, "Hereby we know, that we do know him, if we keep his commandments, is the love of God per-so keepeth his word know, that we are in him," that we are affected the children of God, ver. 5. "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doth righteousness is born of him, ver. 29. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren, ch. iii. ver. 4. Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him, ver. 18. Namely, because we love one another, not in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. Hereby know we, that we dwell in him, because he hath given us of his (loving) Spirit, ch. iv. 13. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the (obedient) Spirit which he hath given us," chap. iii 24.

4. It is highly probable, there never were any children of God, from the beginning of the world unto this day, who were farther advanced in the grace of God, and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, than the apostle John at the time when he wrote these words, and the Fathers in Christ to whom he wrote. Notwithstanding which, it is evident, both the apostle himself, and all those pillars in God's temple, were very far from despising these marks of their being the children of God: and that they applied them to their own souls, for the confirmation of their faith. Yet

all this is no other than rational evidence; the witness of our spirit, our reason or understanding. It all resolves into this; those who have these marks, they are the children of God. But we have these marks: therefore, we are children of God.

5. But how does it appear, that we have these marks? This is a question which still remains. How does it appear, that we do love God and our neighbour? And that we keep his commandments? Observe, that the meaning of the question is, How does it appear to ourselves? (not to others.) I would ask him then that proposes this question, How does it appear to you, that you are alive? And that you are now in ease and not in pain? Are you not immediately conscious of it? By the same immediate consciousness you well know, if your soul is alive to God: if you are saved from the pain of proud wrath, and have the ease of a meek and quiet spirit. By the same means you cannot but perceive, if you love, rejoice, and delight in love your neighbour as yourself. Be directly assured, if you are so, that you are so, and full of gentleness and kindly affection. And with regard to the outward mark of the children of God, which is (according to St. John) the keeping his commandments, you undoubtedly know in your own breast, if, by the grace of God, it belongs to you. Your conscience informs you from day to day, if you do not take the name of God within your lips, unless with seriousness and devotion, with reverence and godly fear; if you remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy: if you honour your father and mother: if you do to all as you would they should do unto you: if you possess your body in sanctification and honour; and if whether you eat or drink, you are temperate therein, and do all to the glory of God.

6. Now this is properly the testimony of our own spirit; even the testimony of our conscience, that God hath given us to be holy of heart, and holy in outward conversation. It is a consciousness of our having received, in and by the spirit of adoption, the tempers mentioned in the word of God, as belonging to his adopted children; even, a loving heart toward God and toward all mankind, hanging with child-like confidence on God our Father, desiring nothing but him, casting all our cares upon him, and embracing ev-



ery child of man, with earnest, tender affection: A consciousness that we are inwardly conformed by the Spirit of God to the image of his Son, and that we walk before him in justice, mercy, and truth, doing the things which are pleasing in his sight.

7. But what is that testimony of God's Spirit, which is superadded to, and conjoined with this? How does he "bear witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." It is hard to find words in the language of men, to explain the deep things of God. Indeed there are none that will adequately express, what the children of God experience. But perhaps one might say (desiring any who are taught of God, to correct or soften, or strengthen the expression) the testimony of the Spirit, is an inward impression on the Soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly "witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God;" that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God.

8. That this testimony of the Spirit of God must needs, in the very nature of things, be antecedent to the testimony of our own spirit, may appear from this single consideration. We must be holy of heart and holy in life, before we can be conscious that we are so; before we can have the testimony of our spirit, that we are inwardly and outwardly holy. But we must love God, before we can be holy at all; this being the root of all holiness. Now we cannot love God, till we know he loves us. "We love him, because he first loved us." And we cannot know his pardoning love to us, till his Spirit witnesses it to our spirit.—Since therefore this testimony of his Spirit must precede the love of God and all holiness, of consequence it must precede our inward consciousness thereof, or, the testimony of our spirit concerning them.

9. Then, and not till then, when the Spirit of God beareth that witness to our spirit, "God hath loved thee, and given his own Son to be the propitiation for thy sins; the Son of God hath loved thee, and hath washed thee from thy sins in his blood?" We love God, because he first loved us, and for his sake we love our brother also. And of this we cannot but be conscious to ourselves; we know the things that are freely given to us of God. We know that

we love God and keep his commandments. And hereby also we know that we are of God. This is that testimony of our own spirit; which so long as we continue to love God and keep his commandments, continues joined with the testimony of God's Spirit, that we are the children of God.

10. Not that I would, by any means, be understood, by any thing which has been spoken concerning it, to exclude the operation of the Spirit of God, even from the testimony of our own spirit. In no wise. It is he that not only worketh in us every manner of thing that is good, but also shines upon his own work, and clearly shews what he has wrought. Accordingly this is spoken of by St. Paul, as one great end of our receiving the Spirit, that we may know the things which are freely given to us of God: that he may strengthen the testimony of our conscience, touching our simplicity and godly sincerity, and give us to discern in a fuller and stronger light, that we now do the things which please him.

11. Should it still be enquired, How does the Spirit of God bear witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, so as to exclude all doubt, and evince the reality of our sonship? The answer is clear from what has been observed above. And first, as to the witness of our spirit. The soul as intimately and evidently perceives, when it loves, delights, and rejoices in God, as when it loves and delights in any thing on earth. And it can no more doubt whether it loves, delights and rejoices, or no, than whether it exists, or no. If therefore this be just reasoning,

He that now loves God, that delights and rejoices in him, with an humble joy, an holy delight, and an obedient love, is a child of God:

But I thus love, delight, and rejoice in God;

Therefore I am a child of God:

Then a Christian can in no wise doubt of his being a child of God. Of the former proposition, he has as full an assurance, as he has that the scriptures are of God. And of his thus loving God, he has an inward proof, which is nothing short of self-evidence. Thus the testimony of our own spirit is with the most intimate conviction, manifested to our hearts: in such a manner, as beyond all reasonable doubt to evince the reality of our sonship.

12. The manner how the divine testimony is manifested to the heart, I do not take upon me to explain. Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me; I cannot attain unto it. The wind bloweth; and I hear the sound thereof. But I cannot tell how it cometh, or whither it goeth. As no one knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man that is in him; so the manner of the things of God knoweth no one, save the Spirit of God. But the fact we know: namely, that the Spirit of God does give a believer such a testimony of his adoption, that while it is present to the soul, he can no more doubt the reality of his sonship, than he can doubt of the shining of the sun, while he stands in the full blaze of his beams.

II. 1. How this joint testimony of God's Spirit and our spirit may be clearly and solidly distinguished, from the presumption of a natural mind, and from the delusion of the devil, is the next thing to be considered. And it highly imports all who desire the salvation of God, to consider it with the deepest attention, as they would not deceive their own souls. An error in this is generally observed to have the most fatal consequences: the rather, because he that errs seldom discovers his mistake, till it is too late to remedy it.

2. And first, How is this testimony to be distinguished from the presumption of a natural mind? It is certain, one who was never convinced of sin, is always ready to flatter himself and to think of himself, especially in spiritual things, more highly than he ought to think. And hence, it is in no wise strange if one who is vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, when he hears of this privilege of true Christians, among whom he undoubtedly ranks himself, should soon work himself up into a persuasion, that he is already possessed thereof. Such instances now abound in the world, and have abounded in all ages. How then may the real testimony of the Spirit with our spirit, be distinguished from this damning presumption?

3. I answer, The holy scriptures abound with marks, whereby the one may be distinguished from the other.—They describe, in the plainest manner, the circumstances which go before, which accompany, and which follow, the true genuine testimony of the Spirit of God with the spirit

of a believer. Whoever carefully weighs and attends to these, will not need to put darkness for light. He will perceive so wide a difference with respect to all these, between the real and the pretended witness of the Spirit, that there will be no danger, I might say no possibility, of confounding the one with the other.

4. By these, one who vainly presumes on the gift of God, might surely know, if he really desired it, that he hath been hitherto given up to a strong delusion, and suffered to believe a lie. For the scriptures lay down those clear, obvious marks as preceding, accompanying, and following that gift, which a little reflection would convince him, beyond all doubt, were never found in his soul. For instance, the scripture describes repentance, or conviction of sin, as constantly going before this witness of pardon. So, Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, Matt. iii. 2. Repent ye, and believe the gospel, Mark i. 15. Repent, and be baptized every one of you, for the remission of sins, Acts ii. 38. Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, chap. iii. 19. In conformity whereto our church also continually places repentance, before pardon or the witness of it. "He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel." "Almighty God—hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them, who with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him." But he is a stranger even to this repentance. He hath never known a broken and a contrite heart. The remembrance of his sins was never grievous unto him, nor the burthen of them intolerable. In repeating those words, he never meant what he said; he merely paid a compliment to God. And were it not only for the want of this previous work of God, he had too great reason to believe, that he hath grasped a mere shadow, and never yet known the real privilege of the sons of God.

5. Again, the scriptures describe the being born of God, which must precede the witness that we are his children, as a vast and mighty change, a change from darkness to light, as well as from the power of Satan unto God: As a passing from death unto life, a resurrection from the dead. Thus the apostle to the Ephesians; You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, chap. ii. ver. 1.



ments, 1 John v. 3. And our Lord himself saith, He that keepeth my commandments, he it is that loveth me, John xiv. 21. Love rejoices to obey; to do in every point, whatever is acceptable to the Beloved. A true lover of God hastens to do his will on earth, as it is done in heaven. But is this the character of the presumptuous pretender to the love of God? Nay, but his love gives him a liberty to disobey, to break, not to keep, the commandments of God.— Perhaps when he is in fear of the wrath of God. He did labour to do his will. But now looking on himself as not under the law, he thinks he is no longer obliged to observe it. He is, therefore, less zealous of good works, less careful to abstain from evil; less watchful over his own heart, less jealous over his tongue; he is less earnest to deny himself, and to take up his cross daily. In a word, the whole form of his life is changed, since he has fancied himself to be at liberty. He is no longer exercising himself unto godliness; wrestling not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, enduring hardships, agonizing to enter in at the strait gate. No; He has found an easier way to heaven; a broad, smooth, flowery path, in which he can say to his soul, “Soul, take thy ease; eat, drink, and be merry.” It follows, with undeniable evidence, that he has not the true testimony of his own Spirit. He cannot be conscious of having those marks which he has not; that lowliness, meekness, and obedience. Nor yet can the Spirit of the God of truth bear witness to a lie; or testify that he is a child of God, when he is manifestly a child of the devil.

8. Discover thyself, thou poor self-deceiver! Thou who art confident of being a child of God; thou who sayest, “I have the witness in myself,” and therefore defiest all thy enemies. Thou art weighed in the balance, and found wanting; even in the balance of the sanctuary. The word of the Lord hath tried thy soul, and proved thee to be reprobate silver. Thou art not lowly of heart. Therefore thou hast not received the Spirit of Jesus unto this day.— Thou art not gentle and meek; therefore thy joy is nothing worth; it is not joy in the Lord. Thou dost not keep his commandments; therefore thou lovest him not, neither art thou partaker of the Holy Ghost. It is, consequently, as certain and as evident as the oracles of God can make it;

his Spirit doth not bear witness with thy spirit, that thou art a child of God. O cry unto him that the scales may fall off thine eyes, that thou mayest know thyself as thou art known: that thou mayest receive the sentence of death in thyself, till thou hear the voice that raises the dead, saying "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven; thy faith hath made thee whole."

9. "But how may one, who has the real witness in himself, distinguish it from presumption?" How, I pray, do you distinguish day from night? How do you distinguish light from darkness? Or the light of a star, or glimmering taper, from the light of the noon-day sun? Is there not an inherent, obvious, essential difference between the one and the other? And do you not immediately and directly perceive that difference, provided your senses are rightly disposed? In like manner, there is an inherent, essential difference between spiritual light and spiritual darkness: and between the light wherewith the Sun of Righteousness shines upon our heart, and that glimmering light, which arises only from sparks of our own kindling. And this difference also is immediately and directly perceived, if our spiritual senses are rightly disposed.

10. To require a more minute and philosophical account of the manner whereby we distinguish these, and of the criteria, or intrinsic marks, whereby we know the voice of God, is to make a demand which can never be answered; no, not by one who has the deepest knowledge of God.—Suppose, when Paul answered before Agrippa, the wise Roman had said, "Thou talkest of hearing the voice of the Son of God. How dost thou know it was his voice? By what criteria, what intrinsic marks, dost thou know the voice of God? Explain to me, the manner of distinguishing this, from a human or angelic voice." Can you believe the apostle himself would have once attempted to answer so idle a demand? And yet doubtless the moment he heard that voice, he knew it was the voice of God. But how he knew this, who is able to explain? Perhaps neither man nor angel.

11. To come yet closer. Suppose God were now to speak to any soul, Thy sins are forgiven thee. He must be willing, that soul should know his voice; otherwise he would speak in vain. And he is able to effect this; for

whenever he wills, to do is present with him. And he does effect it. That soul is absolutely assured, This voice is the voice of God. But yet, he who hath that witness in himself, cannot explain it to one who hath not. Nor indeed is it to be expected that he should. Were there any natural medium to prove, or natural method to explain the things of God, to unexperienced men; then the natural man might discern and know the things of the Spirit of God. But this is utterly contrary to the assertion of the apostle, that he cannot know them; because they are spiritually discerned; even by spiritual senses, which the natural man hath not.

12. "But how shall I know, that my spiritual senses are rightly disposed?" This also is a question of vast importance. For if a man mistake in this, he may run on in endless error and delusion. And how am I assured that this is not my case; and that I do not mistake the voice of the Spirit. Even by the "testimony of your own spirit; by the answer of a good conscience toward God." By the fruits which he hath wrought in your spirit, you shall know the testimony of the Spirit of God. Hereby you shall know, that you are in no delusion, that you have not deceived your own soul. The immediate fruits of the Spirit, ruling in the heart, are love, joy, peace; bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering. And the outward fruits are, the doing good to all men; the doing no evil to any; and the walking in the light; a zealous, uniform obedience to all the commandments of God.

13. By the same fruits shall you distinguish this voice of God, from any delusion of the devil. That proud spirit cannot humble thee before God. He neither can nor would soften thy heart, and melt it first into earnest mourning after God and then into filial love. It is not the adversary of God and man that enables thee to love thy neighbour; or to put on meekness, gentleness, patience, temperance, and the whole armour of God. He is not divided against himself, or a destroyer of sin, his own work. No; it is none but the Son of God who cometh to destroy the works of the devil. As surely, therefore, as holiness is of God, and as sin is the work of the devil, so surely the witness thou hast in thyself is not of Satan but of God.



14. Well then mayst thou say, Thanks be unto *God* for his unspeakable gift! Thanks be unto *God*, who giveth me to know in whom I have believed; who hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son, into my heart, crying, Abba, Father, and even now bearing witness with my spirit, that I am a child of *God*! And see, that not only thy lips, but thy life shew forth his praise. He hath marked thee for his own; glorify him then in thy body and thy spirit which are his. Beloved, if thou hast this hope in thyself, purify thyself as he is pure. While thou beholdest what manner of love the Father hath given thee, that thou shouldst be called a child of *God*; cleanse thyself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of *God*: and let all thy thoughts, words, and works be a spiritual sacrifice, holy, acceptable to *God* through Jesus Christ!

## SERMON XXII.

### THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

#### DISCOURSE II.

ROMANS viii. 16.

*Thy Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God.*

I. 1. **NONE** who believe the scriptures to be the word of *God*, can doubt the importance of such a truth as this: a truth revealed therein, not once only, not obscurely, not incidentally; but frequently, and that in express terms; but solemnly and of set purpose, as denoting one of the peculiar privileges of the children of *God*.

2. And it is the more necessary to explain and defend this truth, because there is a danger on the right hand and on the left. If we deny it, there is a danger lest our religion degenerate into mere formality: lest, having a form of godliness, we neglect, if not deny the power of it. If we

allow it, but do not understand what we allow, we are liable to run into all the wildness of enthusiasm. It is therefore needful, in the highest degree, to guard those who fear *God* from both these dangers, by a scriptural and rational illustration and confirmation of this momentous truth.

3. It may seem, something of this kind is the more needful, because so little has been wrote on the subject with any clearness; unless some discourses on the wrong side of the question, which explain it quite away. And it cannot be doubted, but these were occasioned, at least in great measure, by the crude, unscriptural, irrational explication of others, who knew not what they spoke, nor whereof they affirmed.

4. It more nearly concerns the Methodists, so called, clearly to understand, explain, and defend this doctrine, because it is one grand part of the testimony, which *God* has given them to bear to all mankind. It is by his peculiar blessing upon them in searching the scriptures, confirmed by the experience of his children, that this great evangelical truth has been recovered, which had been for many years well nigh lost and forgotten.

II. 1. But what is the witness of the Spirit? The original word *marturia*, may be rendered either (as it is in several places) the witness, or less ambiguously the testimony, or the record: so it is rendered in our translation, 1 John v. 11. This is the record (the testimony, the sum of what *God* testifies in all the inspired writings) that *God* hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. The testimony now under consideration is given by the Spirit of *God*, to and with our spirit. He is the person testifying. What he testifies to us is, that we are the children of *God*. The immediate result of this testimony is, the fruit of the Spirit; namely, love, joy, peace; long-suffering, gentleness, goodness. And without these, the testimony itself cannot continue. For it is inevitably destroyed, not only by the commission of any outward sin, or the omission of known duty, but by giving way to any inward sin: in a word, by whatever grieves the Holy Spirit of *God*.

2. I observed, many years ago, "It is hard to find words in the language of men, to explain the deep things of *God*. Indeed there are none that will adequately express what

the Spirit of *God* works in his children. But perhaps one might say (desiring any who are taught of *God*, to correct, soften, or strengthen the expression) By the testimony of the Spirit, I mean an inward impression of the soul, whereby the Spirit of *God* immediately and directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of *God*, that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me. That all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to *God*."

3. After twenty years further consideration, I see no cause to retract any part of this. Neither do I conceive how any of these expressions may be altered, so as to make them more intelligible. I can only add, that if any of the children of *God* will point out any other expressions, which are more clear, or more agreeable to the word of *God*, I will readily lay these aside.

4. Meantime let it be observed, I do not mean hereby, that the Spirit of *God* testifies this by an outward voice: no, nor always by an inward voice, although he may do this sometimes. Neither do I suppose that he always applies to the heart, (though he often may) one or more texts of the scripture. But he so works upon the soul by his immediate influence, and by a strong, though inexplicable operation, that the stormy wind and troubled waves subside, and there is a sweet calm: the heart resting as in the arms of Jesus, and the sinner being clearly satisfied, that *God* is reconciled, that all his iniquities are forgiven, and his sins covered.

5. Now, what is the matter of dispute concerning this? Not, whether there be a witness or testimony of the Spirit? Not, whether the Spirit does testify with our spirit, that we are the children of *God*? None can deny this, without flatly contradicting the scripture, and charging a lie upon the *God* of truth. Therefore, that there is a testimony of the Spirit, is acknowledged by all parties.

6. Neither is it questioned, whether there is an indirect witness or testimony, that we are the children of *God*.— This is nearly if not exactly, the same with the testimony of a good conscience towards *God*; and is the result of reason or reflection, on what we feel in our own souls. Strictly speaking, it is a conclusion drawn partly from the word of *God*, and partly from our own experience. The word of

God says, every one who has the fruit of the Spirit is a child of God. Experience, or inward consciousness, tells me that I have the fruit of the Spirit. And hence I rationally conclude, therefore, I am a child of God. This is likewise allowed on all hands, and so is no matter of controversy.

7. Nor do we assert, that there can be any real testimony of the Spirit, without the fruit of the Spirit. We assert, on the contrary, that the fruit of the Spirit immediately springs from this testimony: not always indeed in the same degree, even when the testimony is first given. And much less afterwards; neither joy nor peace are always at one stay. No, nor love; as neither is the testimony itself always equally strong and clear.

8. But the point in question is, Whether there be any direct testimony of the Spirit at all? Whether there be any other testimony of the Spirit, than that which arises from a consciousness of the fruit?

III. 1. I believe there is, because that is the plain, natural meaning of the text, *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.* It is manifest, here are two witnesses mentioned, who together testify the same thing, the Spirit of God, and our own spirit. The late Bishop of London, in his sermon on this text, seems astonished that any one can doubt of this, which appears upon the very face of the words. Now, "The testimony of our own Spirit," says the Bishop, "is one, which is the consciousness of our own sincerity:" or, to express the same thing a little more clearly, the consciousness of the fruit of the Spirit. When our spirit is conscious of this, of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, it easily infers from these premises, that we are the children of God.

2. It is true, that great man supposes the other witness to be "The consciousness of our own good works." This, he affirms, is the testimony of God's Spirit. But this is included in the testimony of our own spirit: Yea, and in sincerity, even according to the common sense of the word. So the apostle: Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world: where it is plain, since-

rity refers to our words and actions, at least, as much as to our inward dispositions. So that this is not another witness, but the very same that he mentioned before : the consciousness of our good works, being only one branch of the consciousness of our sincerity. Consequently here is only one witness still. If therefore the text speaks of two witnesses, one of these is not the consciousness of our good works, neither of our sincerity : all this being manifestly contained in the testimony of our spirit.

3. What then is the other witness? This might easily be learned, if the text itself were not sufficiently clear, from the verse immediately preceding. Ye have received, not the Spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. It follows, The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

4. This is farther explained by the parallel text, Gal. iv. 6. Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Is not this something immediate and direct, not the result of reflection or argumentation? Does not this Spirit cry, Abba, Father, in our hearts, the moment it is given? Antecedent to any reflection upon our sincerity, yea, to any reasoning whatsoever? And is not this the plain, natural sense of the words which strikes any one as soon as he hears them? All these texts then, in their most obvious meaning, describe a direct testimony of the Spirit.

5. That the testimony of the Spirit of God, must, in the very nature of things, be antecedent to the testimony of our own spirit, may appear from this single consideration. We must be holy in heart and life, before we can be conscious that we are so. But we must love God before we can be holy at all, this being the root of all holiness. Now we cannot love God, till we know he loves us : we love him, because he first loved us. And we cannot know his love to us, till his Spirit witnesses it to our spirit. Till then we cannot believe it : we only say, the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Then—only then we feel  
 Our interest in his blood,  
 And cry with joy unspeakable,  
 'Thou art my Lord—my God.

Since, therefore, the testimony of his Spirit must precede the love of God and all holiness, of consequence it must precede our consciousness thereof.

6. And here properly comes in, to confirm this scriptural doctrine, the experience of the children of God: the experience not of two or three, not of a few, but of a great multitude, which no man can number. It has been confirmed, both in this and in all ages, by a cloud of living and dying witnesses. It is confirmed by your experience and mine. The Spirit itself bore witness to my spirit, that I was a child of God, gave me an evidence thereof, and I immediately cried, Abba, Father! And this I did, (and so did you) before I reflected on, or was conscious of any fruit of the Spirit. It was from this testimony received, that love, joy, peace, and the whole fruit of the Spirit flowed. First I heard,

Thy sins are forgiven!  
 Accepted thou art!  
 I listened, and heaven  
 Sprung up in my heart.

7. But this is confirmed, not only by the experience of the children of God, thousands of whom can declare, that they never did know themselves to be in the favour of God, till it was directly witnessed to them by his Spirit: but by all those who are convinced of sin, who feel the wrath of God abiding on them. These cannot be satisfied with any thing less than a direct testimony from his Spirit, that he is merciful to their unrighteousness, and remembers their sins and iniquities no more. Tell any of these, "You are to know you are a child, by reflecting on what he has wrought in you, on your love, joy, and peace:" and will he not immediately reply, By all this I know I am a child of the devil. I have no more love to God than the devil has: my carnal mind is enmity against God. I have no joy in the Holy Ghost: my soul is sorrowful even unto death. I have

no peace: my heart is a troublesome sea: I am all storm and tempest. And which way can these souls possibly be comforted, but by a divine testimony, (not that they are good, or sincere, or conformable to the scripture in heart and life, but) that God justifieth the ungodly: him that till the moment he is justified, is all ungodly, void of all true holiness: Him that worketh not, that worketh nothing that is truly good, till he is conscious that he is accepted, not for any works of righteousness which he hath done, but by the mere, free mercy of God? Wholly and solely for what the Son of God hath done and suffered for him? And can it be any otherwise, if a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law? If so, what inward or outward goodness can he be conscious of, antecedent to his justification? Nay, is not the having nothing to pay, that is, the being conscious that there dwelleth in us no good thing, neither inward nor outward goodness, essentially, indispensably necessary, before we can be justified freely, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ? Was any man justified since his coming into the world, or can any man ever be justified, till he is brought to that point,

“ I give up every plea, beside  
 Lord, I am damned—But thou hast died!”

8. Every one, therefore, who denies the existence of such a testimony, does in effect deny justification by faith. It follows, that either he never experienced this, either he never was justified, or that he has forgotten, (as St. Peter speaks) *tau katharismou ton pakui amartian*, the purification from his former sins, the experience he then had himself, the manner wherein God wrought in his own soul when his former sins were blotted out.

9. And the experience even of the children of the world, here confirms that of the children of God. Many of these have a desire to please God: some of them take much pains to please him. But do they not, one and all, count it the highest absurdity, for any to talk of “ knowing his sins are forgiven?” Which of them even pretends to any such thing? And yet many of them are conscious of their own sincerity. Many of them undoubtedly have, in a degree, the testimony of their own spirit, a consciousness of their

own uprightnes. But this brings them no consciousness, that they are forgiven, no knowledge that they are the children of God. Yea, the more sincere they are, the more uneasy they generally are, for want of knowing it: plainly shewing that this cannot be known, in a satisfactory manner, by the bare testimony of our own spirit, without God's directly testifying, that we are his children.

IV. But abundance of objections have been made to this; the chief of which it may be well to consider:

1. It is objected, first, "Experience is not sufficient, to prove a doctrine which is not founded on scripture." This is undoubtedly true; and it is an important truth; but it does not affect the present question. For it has been shewn that this doctrine is founded on scripture. Therefore, experience is properly alledged to confirm it.

2. "But madmen, French prophets and enthusiasts of every kind have imagined they experienced this witness." They have so. And perhaps not a few of them did, altho' they did not retain it long. But if they did not, this is no proof at all, that others have not experienced it: as a madman's imagining himself a king, does not prove, that there are no real kings.

"Nay, many who plead strongly for this, have utterly decried the Bible." Perhaps so; but this was no necessary consequence; thousands plead for it, who have the highest esteem for the Bible.

"Yea, but many have fatally deceived themselves hereby, and got above all conviction."

And yet a scriptural doctrine is no worse, though men abuse it to their own destruction.

3. "But I lay it down as an undoubted truth, the fruit of the Spirit is the witness of the Spirit."

Not undoubted; thousands doubt of, yea, flatly deny it: but to let that pass. "If this witness be sufficient, there is no need of any other. But it is sufficient, unless in one of these cases, 1. The total absence of the fruit of the Spirit." And this is the case, when the direct witness is first given: 2. "The not perceiving it. But to contend for it in this case, is to contend for being in the favour of God, and not knowing it." True, not knowing it at that time any otherwise than by the testimony which is given for that



end. And this we do contend for: we contend that the direct witness may shine clear, even while the indirect one is under a cloud.

4. It is objected, secondly, "The design of the witness contended for, is to prove that the profession we make is genuine. But it does not prove this." I answer, the proving this, is not the design of it. It is antecedent to our making any profession at all, but that of being lost, undone, guilty, helpless sinners. It is designed to assure those to whom it is given, that they are the children of God; that they are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. And this does not suppose, that their preceding thoughts, words and actions, are conformable to the rule of scripture. It supposes quite the reverse, namely, That they are sinners all over, sinners both in heart and life. Were it otherwise, God would justify the godly; and their own works would be counted to them for righteousness. And I cannot but fear, that a supposition of our being justified by works, is at the root of all their objections. For whoever cordially believes, that God imputes to all that are justified, righteousness without works, will find no difficulty in allowing the witness of his Spirit, preceding the fruit of it.

5. It is objected, thirdly, "One evangelist says, your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. The other evangelist calls the same thing good gifts; abundantly demonstrating, that the Spirit's way of bearing witness, is by giving good gifts." Nay, here is nothing at all about bearing witness, either in one text or the other. Therefore, till this demonstration is better demonstrated, I let it stand as it is.

6. It is objected, fourthly, "The scripture says, the tree is known by its fruits. Prove all things. Try the spirits. Examine yourselves." Most true: therefore, let every man who believes he hath the witness in himself, try whether it be of God; if the fruit follow, it is, otherwise, it is not. For certainly the tree is known by its fruit: Hereby we prove, if it be of God. "But the direct witness is never referred to in the book of God." Not as standing alone, not as a single witness, but as connected with the other: As giving a joint testimony, testifying with our spirit, that we are children of God. And who is able to prove

that it is not thus referred to, in this very scripture, Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: prove yourselves. Know ye not yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? It is by no means clear, that they did not know this by a direct as well as a remote witness. How is it proved, that they did not know it, first, by an inward consciousness, and then by love, joy, and peace?

7. "But the testimony arising from the internal and external change, is constantly referred to in the Bible." It is so. And we constantly refer thereto, to confirm the testimony of the Spirit. "Nay, all the marks you have given, whereby to distinguish the operations of God's Spirit from delusion, referred to the change wrought in us and upon us." This likewise is undoubtedly true.

8. It is objected, fifthly, that "The direct witness of the Spirit, does not secure us from the greatest delusion. And is that a witness fit to be trusted, whose testimony cannot be depended on? That is forced to fly to something else, to prove what it asserts?" I answer. To secure us from all delusion, God gives us two witnesses that we are his children. And this they testify conjointly. Therefore, what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. And while they are joined, we cannot be deluded: their testimony can be depended on. They are fit to be trusted in the highest degree, and need nothing else to prove what they assert.

"Nay, the direct witness only asserts, but does not prove any thing." By two witnesses shall every word be established. And when the Spirit witnesses with our spirit, as God designs it to do, then it fully proves that we are children of God.

9. It is objected, sixthly, "You own the change wrought is a sufficient testimony, unless in the case of severe trials, Such as that of our Saviour upon the cross. But none of us can be tried in that manner." But you or I may be tried in such a manner, and so may any other child of God, that it will be impossible for us to keep our filial confidence in God, without the direct witness of his Spirit.

10. It is objected, lastly, "The greatest contenders for it, are some of the proudest and most uncharitable of men." Perhaps some of the hottest contenders for it are both proud, and uncharitable. But many of the firmest contenders for

it, are eminently meek and lowly in heart : and indeed in all other respects also,

True followers of their lamb-like Lord.

The preceding objections are the most considerable that I have heard, and I believe contain the strength of the cause. Yet I apprehend whoever calmly and impartially considers those objections and the answers together, will easily see, that they do not destroy, no, nor weaken the evidence of that great truth, that the Spirit of God does directly, as well as indirectly testify, that we are children of God.

V. 1. The sum of all is this. The testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the souls of believers, whereby the Spirit of God directly testifies to their spirit, that they are children of God. And it is not questioned, whether there is a testimony of the Spirit? But whether there is any direct testimony? Whether there is any other than that which arises from a consciousness of the fruit of the Spirit? We believe there is; because this is the plain natural meaning of the text, illustrated both by the preceding words, and by the parallel passage in the epistle to the Galatians; because, in the nature of the thing, the testimony must precede the fruit which springs from it, and because this plain meaning of the word of God is confirmed by the experience of innumerable children of God; yea, and by the experience of all who are convinced of sin, who can never rest, till they have a direct witness: and even of the children of the world, who not having the witness in themselves, one and all declare, none can know his sins forgiven.

2. And whereas it is objected, that experience is not sufficient to prove a doctrine unsupported by scripture: that madmen and enthusiasts of every kind, have imagined such a witness: that the design of that witness is to prove our profession genuine, which design it does not answer: that the scripture says, The tree is known by its fruit; examine yourselves; prove your own selves; and mean time the direct witness is never referred to in the book of God: that it does not secure us from the greatest delusions; and, last-

ly, that the change wrought in us is a sufficient testimony, unless in such trials as Christ alone suffered. We answer, 1. Experience is sufficient to confirm a doctrine which is grounded on scripture: 2. Though many fancy they experience what they do not, this is no prejudice to real experience: 3. The design of that witness is, to assure us we are children of God. And this design it does answer. 4. The true witness of the Spirit is known by its fruit, love, peace, joy; not indeed preceding, but following it: 5. It cannot be proved, that the direct, as well as the indirect witness, is not referred to in that very text, Know ye not your own-selves that Jesus Christ is in you? 6. The Spirit of God witnessing with our spirit does secure us from all delusion: And, lastly, We are all liable to trials, wherein the testimony of our own spirit is not sufficient; wherein nothing less than the direct testimony of God's Spirit can assure us that we are his children.

3. Two inferences may be drawn from the whole. The first, Let none ever presume to rest, in any supposed testimony of the Spirit, which is separate from the fruit of it. If the Spirit of God does really testify that we are children of God, the immediate consequence will be the fruit of the Spirit, even love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance. And however this fruit may be clouded for a while, during the time of strong temptation, so that it does not appear to the tempted person, while Satan is sifting him as wheat, yet the substantial part of it remains, even under the thickest cloud. It is true, joy in the Holy Ghost may be withdrawn, during the hour of trial. Yea, the soul may be exceeding sorrowful, while the hour and power of darkness continue. But even this is generally restored with increase, till we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

4. The second inference is, Let none rest in any supposed fruit of the Spirit without the witness. There may be foretastes of joy, of peace, of love, and those not delusive, but really from God, long before we have the witness in ourselves, before the Spirit of God witnesses with our spirits, that we have redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins. Yea, there may be a degree of long-suffering, of gentleness, of fidelity, of meekness, temperance, (not a shadow thereof, but a real degree, by the

preventing grace of God) before we are accepted in the Beloved, and consequently before we have a testimony of our acceptance. But it is by no means adviseable to rest here; it is at the peril of our souls if we do. If we are wise we shall be continually crying to God, until his Spirit cry in our heart, Abba, Father! This is the privilege of all the children of God, and without this we can never be assured that we are his children. Without this we cannot retain a steady peace, nor avoid perplexing doubts and fears. But when we have once received this Spirit of adoption, this peace which passes all understanding, and which expels all painful doubt and fear, will keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. And when this has brought forth its genuine fruit, all inward and outward holiness, it is undoubtedly the will of him that calleth us, to give us always what he has once given. So that there is no need, that we should ever more be deprived of either the testimony of God's Spirit, or the testimony of our own, the consciousness of our walking in all righteousness and true holiness.

NEWRY, *April 4, 1767.*

## SERMON XXIII.

## THE WITNESS OF OUR OWN SPIRIT.

2 COR. i. 12.

*This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.*

1. **S**UCH is the voice of every true believer in Christ, so long as he abides in faith and love. He that followeth me, saith our Lord, walketh not in darkness: And while he hath the light, he rejoiceth therein. As he hath received the Lord Jesus Christ, so he walketh in him.— And while he walketh in him, the exhortation of the apostle takes place in his soul day by day, Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice.

2. But that we may not build our house upon the sand, (lest when the rains descend, and the winds blow, and the floods arise and beat upon it, it fall, and great be the fall thereof) I intend, in the following discourse, to shew, what is the nature and ground of a Christian's joy. We know, in general, It is that happy peace, that calm satisfaction of spirit, which arises from such a testimony of his conscience, as is here described by the apostle. But in order to understand this the more thoroughly, it will be requisite to weigh all his words: Whence will easily appear, both what we are to understand by conscience, and what, by the testimony thereof; and also, how he that hath this testimony rejoiceth evermore.

3. And, first, What are we to understand by conscience? What is the meaning of this word that is in every one's mouth? One would imagine it was an exceeding difficult thing to discover this, when we consider, how large and numerous volumes have been from time to time wrote on this

subject: and how all the treasures of ancient and modern learning have been ransacked, in order to explain it. And yet it is to be feared, it has not received much light from all those elaborate inquiries. Rather, have not most of those writers puzzled the cause, darkening counsel by words without knowledge; perplexing a subject plain in itself, and easy to be understood? For, set aside but hard words, and every man of an honest heart will soon understand the thing.

4. God has made us thinking beings, capable of perceiving what is present, and of reflecting or looking back on what is past. In particular; we are capable of perceiving, whatsoever passes in our own hearts or lives; of knowing whatsoever we feel or do; and that either while it passes, or when it is past. This we mean when we say, Man is a conscious being: he hath a consciousness or inward perception, both of things present and past, relating to himself, of his own tempers and outward behaviour. But what we usually term conscience, implies somewhat more than this. It is not barely, the knowledge of our present, or the remembrance of our preceding life. To remember, to bear witness either of past or present things, is only one, and the least office of conscience. Its main business is to excuse or accuse, to approve or disapprove, to acquit or condemn.

5. Some late writers indeed have given a new name to this, and have chose to stile it, a moral sense. But the old word seems preferable to the new, were it only on this account, That it is more common and familiar among men, and therefore easier to be understood. And to Christians it is undeniably preferable, on another account also; namely, because it is scriptural; because it is the word which the wisdom of God hath chose to use in the inspired writings.

And according to the meaning wherewith it is generally used there, particularly in the epistles of St. Paul, we may understand by conscience, A faculty or power, implanted by God in every soul that comes into the world, of perceiving what is right or wrong in his own heart or life, in his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions.

6. But what is the rule whereby men are to judge of right and wrong? Whereby their conscience is to be di-

rected? The rule of Heathens (as the apostle teaches elsewhere) is the law written in our hearts. These saith he, not having the (outward) law, are a law unto themselves: Who shew the work of the law (that which the outward law prescribes) written in their heart, by the finger of God: their conscience also bearing witness, whether they walk by this rule or not; and their thoughts the mean while acquitting, defending them, (*eki apologoumenou*) Rom. ii. 14 15. But the Christian rule of right and wrong is the word of God, the writings of the Old and New Testament: All that the prophets and holy men of old wrote, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost: all that scripture which was given by inspiration of God, and which is indeed profitable for doctrine, or teaching the whole will of God: for reproof of what is contrary thereto; for correction of error, and for instruction, or training us up, in righteousness, 2 Tim. iii. 16.

This is a lantern unto a Christian's feet, and a light in all his paths. This alone he receives as his rule of right or wrong, of whatever is really good or evil. He esteems nothing good, but what is here enjoined, either directly or by plain consequence. He accounts nothing evil but what is here forbidden, either in terms, or by undeniable inference. Whatever the scripture neither forbids nor enjoins (either directly, or by plain consequence) he believes to be of an indifferent nature, to be in itself neither good nor evil: This being the whole and sole outward rule, whereby his conscience is to be directed in all things.

7. And if it be directed thereby in fact, then hath he the answer of a good conscience toward God. A good conscience is what is elsewhere termed by the apostle, a conscience void of offence. So, what he at one time expresses thus, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day, Acts xxiii. 1. he denotes at another, by that expression, Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man, chap. xxiv. 16. Now in order to this, there is absolutely required, First, A right understanding of the word of God, of his holy, and acceptable, and perfect will concerning us, as it is revealed therein. For it is impossible we should walk by a rule, if we do not know what it means. There is, Secondly, required, which how few have attained? A



true knowledge of ourselves, a knowledge both of our hearts and lives, of our inward tempers and outward conversation: seeing if we know them not, it is not possible that we should compare them with our rule. There is required, Thirdly, an agreement of our hearts and lives, of our tempers and conversation, of our thoughts, and words, and works with that rule, with the written word of God. For without this, if we have any conscience at all, it can be only an evil conscience. There is, Fourthly, required, an inward perception, of this agreement with our rule. And this habitual perception, this inward consciousness itself, is properly a good conscience; or, in the other phrase of the apostle, A conscience void of offence, toward God and toward man.

3. But whoever desires to have a conscience thus void of offence, let him see that he lay the right foundation. — Let him remember, other foundation of this can no man lay, than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ. And let him also be mindful, that no man buildeth on him but by a living faith; that no man is a partaker of Christ, until he can clearly testify, The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God; in him who is now revealed in my heart; who loved me, and gave himself for me. Faith alone is that evidence, that conviction, that demonstration of things invisible, whereby the eyes of our understanding being opened, and divine light poured in upon them, we see the wondrous things of God's law, the excellency and purity of it; the height, and depth, and length, and breadth thereof, and of every commandment contained therein. It is by faith, that beholding the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, we perceive, as in a glass, all that is in ourselves, yea, the inmost motions of our souls. And by this alone can that blessed love of God be shed abroad in our hearts, which enables us so to love one another as Christ loved us. By this, is that gracious promise fulfilled unto all the Israel of God, I will put my laws in their minds, and write (or engrave) them in their hearts, Heb. viii. 10. Hereby producing in their souls, an entire agreement with his holy and perfect law, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

And as an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit, so a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. As the heart there-

fore of a believer, so likewise his life is thoroughly conformed to the rule of God's commandments. In a consciousness whereof, he can give glory to God, and say with the Apostle, This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.

9. We have had our conversation. The Apostle, in the original, expresses this by one single word (*anesrappemen.*) But the meaning thereof is exceeding broad, taking in our whole deportment, yea, every inward as well as outward circumstance, whether relating to our soul or body. It includes every motion of our heart, of our tongue, of our hands and bodily members. It extends to all our actions and words; to the employment of all our powers and faculties; to the manner of using every talent we have received, with respect either to God or man.

10. We have had our conversation in the world; even in the world of the ungodly: Not only among the children of God, (that were, comparatively, a little thing) but among the children of the devil, among those that lie in wickedness, *en to ponero*, in the wicked one. What a world is this! How thoroughly impregnated with the spirit it continually breathes! as our God is good and doth good, so the god of this world, and all his children are evil, and do evil, (so far as they are suffered) to all the children of God. Like their father, they are always lying in wait, or walking about, seeking whom they may devour: Using fraud or force, secret wiles or open violence, to destroy those who are not of the world: Continually warring against our souls, and by old or new weapons and devices of every kind, labouring to bring them back into the snare of the devil, into the broad road that leadeth to destruction.

11. We have had our conversation in such a world, in simplicity and godly sincerity. First, in simplicity. This is what our Lord recommends, under the name of a single eye. The light of the body, saith he, is the eye. If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. The meaning whereof is this. What the eye is to the body, that the intention is, to all the words and actions. If therefore this eye of thy soul be single, all thy actions and

-conversation shall be full of light, of the light of heaven ; of love, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

We are then simple of heart, when the eye of our mind is singly fixt on God : When in all things we aim at God alone, as our God, our portion, our strength, our happiness, our exceeding great reward, our all in time and eternity. This is simplicity ; when a steady view, a single intention of promoting his glory, of doing and suffering his blessed will, runs through our whole soul, fills all our heart, and is the constant spring of all our thoughts, desires and purposes.

12. We have had our conversation in the world, Secondly, in godly sincerity. The difference between simplicity and sincerity seems to be chiefly this : Simplicity regards the intention itself, sincerity the execution of it. And this sincerity relates not barely to our words, but to our whole conversation, as described above. It is not here to be understood in that narrow sense, wherein St. Paul himself sometimes uses it, for speaking the truth, or abstaining from guile, from craft and dissimulation. But in a more extensive meaning, as actually hitting the mark which we aim at by simplicity. Accordingly it implies in this place, that we do in fact speak and do all to the glory of God : that all our words are not only pointed at this, but actually conduce thereto ; that all our actions flow on in an even stream, uniformly subservient to this great end : And that in our whole lives we are moving straight toward God, and that continually ; walking steadily on in the highway of holiness, in the paths of justice, mercy, and truth.

13. This sincerity is termed by the apostle, godly sincerity, or the sincerity of God, (*eilikrineia Theou*) to prevent our mistaking or confounding it with the sincerity of the heathens : (For they had also a kind of sincerity among them, for which they professed no small veneration) likewise to denote the object and end of this, as of every Christian virtue ; seeing whatever does not ultimately tend to God, sinks among the beggarly elements of the world. By stiling it the sincerity of God, he also points out the author of it, the Father of light, from whom every good and perfect gift descendeth : Which is still more clearly declared in the following words, Not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God.

14. Not with fleshly wisdom. As if he had said, We cannot thus converse in the world, by any natural strength or understanding, neither by any naturally-acquired knowledge or wisdom. We cannot gain this simplicity, or practise this sincerity, by the force either of good sense, good nature, or good breeding. It overshoots all our native courage and resolution, as well as all our precepts of philosophy. The power of custom is not able to train us up to this, nor the most exquisite rules of human education.— Neither could I, Paul, ever attain hereto, notwithstanding all the advantages I enjoyed, so long as I was in the flesh, in my natural state, and pursued it only by fleshly, natural wisdom.

And yet surely, if any man could, Paul himself might have attained thereto by that wisdom. For we can hardly conceive any, who was more highly favoured with all the gifts, both of nature and education. Besides his natural abilities, probably not inferior to those of any person then upon the earth, he had all the benefits of learning, studying at the University of Tarsus, afterwards brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, the person of the greatest account, both for knowledge and integrity, that was then in the whole Jewish nation. And he had all the possible advantages of religious education, being a Pharisee, trained up in the very strictest sect or profession, distinguished from all others by a more eminent strictness. And herein he had profited above many others, who were his equals in years, being more abundantly zealous of whatever he thought would please God, and as touching the righteousness of the law blameless. But it could not be, that he should hereby attain this simplicity and godly sincerity. It was all but lost labour; in a deep, piercing sense of which, he was at length constrained to cry out, The things which were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, Phil. iii. 7, 8.

15. It could not be that ever he should attain to this, but by the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord: Or by the grace of God; another expression of nearly the same import. By the grace of God is sometimes to be understood, that free love, that unmerited mercy, by which I, a sinner, through the merits of Christ, am now reconciled

to God. But in this place it rather means, that power of God the Holy Ghost, which worketh in us both to will and to do, of his good pleasure. As soon as ever the grace of God, in the former sense, his pardoning love is manifested to our soul; the grace of God, in the latter sense, the power of his Spirit, takes place therein. And now we can perform, through God, what to man was impossible. Now we can order our conversation aright. We can do all things in the light and power of that love, through Christ which strengtheneth us. We now have the testimony of our conscience, which we could never have by fleshly wisdom, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have our conversation in the world.

16. This is properly the ground of a Christian's joy. We may now therefore readily conceive, How he that hath this testimony in himself, rejoiceth evermore. My soul, may he say, doth magnify the Lord, and my Spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour. I rejoice in him, who of his unmerited love, of his own free and tender mercy, hath called me into this state of salvation, wherein through his power I now stand. I rejoice, because his Spirit beareth witness to my spirit, that I am bought with the blood of the Lamb, and that believing in him, "I am a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." I rejoice, because the sense of God's love to me hath, by the same Spirit, wrought in me to love him, and to love, for his sake, every child of man, every soul that he hath made. I rejoice, because he gives me to feel in myself the mind that was in Christ: Simplicity, a single eye to him, in every motion of my heart; Power always to fix the loving eye of my soul on him who loved me, and gave himself for me, to aim at him alone, at his glorious will, in all I think or speak, or do: Purity, desiring nothing more but God, crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, setting my affections on things above, not on things of the earth: Holiness, a recovery of the image of God, a renewal of soul after his likeness: And godly sincerity, directing all my words and works, so as to conduce to his glory. In this I likewise rejoice, yea, and will rejoice, because my conscience beareth me witness in the Holy Ghost, by the light he continually pours in upon it, that I walk worthy of the vocation wherewith I am called: that I abstain from all ap-

pearance of evil, fleeing from sin as from the face of a serpent; that as I have opportunity, I do all possible good, in every kind to all men; that I follow my Lord in all my steps, and do what is acceptable in his sight. I rejoice because I both see and feel, through the inspiration of God's holy Spirit, that all my works are wrought in him, yea, and that it is he who worked all my works in me. I rejoice in seeing, through the light of God which shines in my heart, that I have power to walk in his ways, and that thro' his grace, I turn not therefrom, to the right hand or to the left.

17. Such is the ground and the nature of that joy, whereby an adult Christian rejoiceth evermore. And from all this we may easily infer, First, That this is not a natural cause: Not from any sudden flow of spirits. This may give a transient start of joy. But the Christian rejoiceth always. It cannot be owing to bodily health or ease; to strength and soundness of constitution. For it is equally strong in sickness and pain; yea, perhaps far stronger than before. Many Christians have never experienced any joy, to be compared with that which then filled their soul, when the body was well nigh worn out with pain, or consumed away with pining sickness. Least of all can it be ascribed to outward prosperity, to the favour of men, or plenty of worldly goods. For then chiefly, when their faith has been tried as with fire, by all manner of outward afflictions, have the children of God rejoiced in him, whom unseen they loved, even with joy unspeakable. And never surely did men rejoice like those, who were used as the filth and off-scouring of the world; who wandered to and fro, being in want of all things; in hunger, in cold, in nakedness: Who had trials, not only of cruel mockings, but, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments: Yea, who at last counted not their lives dear unto themselves, so they might finish their course with joy.

18. From the preceding considerations, we may, Secondly, infer, That the joy of a Christian does not arise from any blindness of conscience, from his not being able to discern good from evil. So far from it, that he was an utter stranger to this joy, till the eyes of his understanding were opened! that he knew it not, until he had spiritual senses, fitted to discern spiritual good and evil. And now

the eye of his soul waxeth not dim. He was never so sharp-sighted before. He has so quick a perception of the smallest things, as is quite amazing to the natural man.—As a mote is visible in the sun-beam, so to him who is walking in the light, in the beams of the uncreated sun, every mote of sin is visible. Nor does he close the eyes of his conscience any more. That sleep is departed from him. His soul is always broad awake: No more slumber or folding of the hands to rest! He is always standing on the tower, and hearkening what his Lord will say concerning him: and always rejoicing in this very thing, in seeing him that is invisible.

19. Neither does the joy of a Christian arise, Thirdly, from any dullness or callousness of conscience. A kind of joy, it is true, may arise from this, in those whose foolish hearts are darkened; whose heart is callous, unfeeling, dull of sense; and, consequently, without spiritual understanding. Because of their senseless, unfeeling hearts, they may rejoice even in committing sin: And this they may probably call liberty! Which is indeed more drunkenness of soul: a fatal numbness of spirit, the stupid insensibility of a seared conscience. On the contrary, a Christian has the most exquisite sensibility; such as he could not have conceived before. He never had such a tenderness of conscience, as he has had since the love of God has reigned in his heart. And this also is his glory and joy; that God hath heard his daily prayer,

“O that my tender soul might fly  
The first abhorr'd approach of ill:  
Quick as the apple of an eye,  
The slightest touch of sin to feel.”

20. To conclude. Christian joy, is joy in obedience: Joy in loving God, and keeping his commandments. And yet not in keeping them, as if we were thereby to fulfil the terms of the covenant of works; as if by any works or righteousness of ours, we were to procure pardon and acceptance with God. Not so: We are already pardoned and accepted, through the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Not as if we were by our own obedience to procure life from the death of sin. This also we have already through

the grace of God. Us hath he quickened, who were dead in sin. And now we are alive to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. But we rejoyce in walking, according to the covenant of grace, in holy love and happy obedience. We rejoyce in knowing, that being justified through his grace, we have not received that grace of God in vain ; that God hath freely (not for the sake of our willing or running, but through the blood of the Lamb) reconciled us to himself, we run in the strength which he hath given us, the way of his commandments. He hath girded us with strength unto the war, and we gladly fight the good fight of faith. We rejoyce, through him who liveth in our hearts by faith, to lay hold of eternal life. This is our rejoicing ; that as our Father worketh hitherto, so (not by our own might or wisdom, but through the power of his Spirit, freely given in Christ Jesus) we also work the works of God. And may he work in us whatsoever is well-pleasing in his sight ! To whom be the praise for ever and ever !

*FINIS.*











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